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A Different Approach to the Sublime

JONATHAN CULLER

Neil Hertz seems a most unlikely theorist of the sublime, in the line of Longinus, Burke, and Kant. Longinus and Burke display an unbounded admiration for moments of elevation, in expression and nature – not so Hertz, a great raconteur with an ironic sense of humor, a man of the people, able to talk to anyone. Neither Longinus, Burke nor Kant is notable for a sense of humor, and they are all quite snooty about the low or the trivial. "The use of trivial words," writes Longinus, "terribly disfigures passages in the grand style" (154). But the moments of incongruity that provoke and dismay Longinus are precisely what capture Hertz's attention, and his best stories are likely to have as a punch line something incongruous that somebody said.

For Longinus sublimity comes from nobility of soul and manifests itself in elevated language. Hertz, *au contraire*, is suspicious of those moments when "the language rises," as he puts it in *The End of the Line* (62). He has a nose for precisely those moments of "tonal heightening," which attract his critical eye and reveal special investments, something suspicious going on – by contrast with moments of less inflated language.

It is not just Hertz the raconteur who savors the deflation produced by the vulgar or overly familiar but also Hertz the critic. In "Recognizing Casaubon," an essay whose centrality for his work is marked by the fact that it appears in *George Eliot's Pulse* as well as in *The End of the Line*, the opening page considers a passage where Eliot asks "Will not a tiny speck very close to our vision blot out the glory of the world and leave only a margin by which we see the blot? I know no speck so troublesome as self." This is an example of what critics particularly admire in Eliot, Hertz writes

> The intelligence at work extending a line of figurative language brings it back, with a nice appropriateness, to the ethical point. This is an instance of the sort of metaphorical control that teacher-critics have always admired in *Middlemarch*, the sign of a humane moral consciousness elaborating patterns of action and imagery with great inventiveness and absolutely no horsing around. (Pulse 20).

This is an instance of the sort of touch that readers have always admired in Hertz: if things seem to be getting too solemn, high-minded and potentially pretentious, he will find just the right deflationary turn, that punctures pretension while nevertheless making the point; and, since no doubt we all secretly fear that we are being pretentiously inflationary when we write about the important intricacies of these texts that fascinate us, his deflationary turns make his point all the more impregnable. We might have smiled indulgently at the "humane moral consciousness," but "with no horsing around" enables us to embrace that judgment in better conscience.

In "More words: Nullify, Neutral, Numb, Number," Hertz writes that the arrival of Daniel Deronda's father is

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> the occasion for one of those scenes of morally impeccable denunciation that have punctuated George Eliot's fiction from the first –thoroughly gratifying scenes in which one character is licensed to verbally excoriate another. Her readers have always admired them and no doubt even come to expect them: Nanny in 'Amos Barton" giving the Countess what for… . (Pulse 122-3)

("Morally impeccable denunciation" should perhaps have warned us that we needed to be pulled up short). Later in the same essay, when consideration of *neutral* and *neutralize* demands a reference to *le neutre* in Blanchot, which necessarily heightens and solemnifies the tone, Hertz quotes the opening of *Le Pas au-dela*: "'Nous pouvons toujours nous interroger sur le neutre.' 'We can always ask ourselves about the neutral.' 'Lotsa luck!' would seem the appropriate unspoken reply to this proposal" (127). Wry amusement and suspicion are his responses to the inflated language that is characteristic of the sublime and that is likely to arise at other points when authors are getting wrought up about something. Writing of a moment in Flaubert's first *Education sentimentale*, he notes that "the language in these pages is more convincing because considerably less inflated" (End 67). With that value scheme, how did he become our most subtle and powerful theorist of the sublime?

One might expect this Hertz to be a debunker of the sublime rather than its patient theorist and expositor. In "Two Extravagant Teachings," in *The End of the Line*," he takes as one text a pamphlet that the Cornell English department used to distribute, "A Writer's Responsibilities." His reading shrewdly locates precisely those investments betrayed by the high sentiments and lofty expression of the passages about teaching and writing:

> Education at its best, whether conducted in seminar, laboratory, or lecture hall, is essentially a dialogue between teacher and pupil in which questions and answers can be explored, arguments can be posed and resolved, data can be sought and evaluated. From the time of Socrates and his disciples to that of the nightly discussion on the corridor, this dialogue has been the mark and delight of intellectual life. (End 144)

But, another passage on the same page of this pamphlet specifies:

> The Policy of the English Department
>
> For the first instance of plagiarism or of any other kind of academic dishonesty or irresponsibility, the student will immediately receive a failing grade in the course and be reported to the appropriate department, division or college for whatever further action may be in order.

Hertz writes,

> The lineaments of an American scene of instruction are sketched in these paragraphs. The student might be Alcibiades, but then again he might be Al Capone; his teacher is either a master of instructive dialogue or a disciplinarian, and the whole operation can feel like "the intellectual life" one moment the next like a low budget cops-and-robbers routine. (145).

He then takes up a particularly intense sentence of high-mindedness from the pamphlet about the punishment of offenders against intellectual honesty, the development of which is said to be one of the principal aims of a college education:

> What a penalized student suffers can never really be known by anyone but himself; what the student who plagiarizes and 'gets away with it' suffers is less public and probably less acute, but the corruptness of his act, the disloyalty and baseness it entails, must inevitably leave an ineradicable mark upon him as well as on the institution of which he is privileged to be a member. (146)

Hertz notes "the rising rhythms of the last sentence, the echoing absolutes ('inevitably,' 'ineradicable'), the huff and puff of its concluding phrase." And the quotation marks around "gets away with it," "perhaps mimicking student diction, present the difference between the vulnerable institution and its disloyal member as if it were also a difference in verbal refinement: we are polysyllabic, they are slobs" (146).

I shall return later to his analysis of this sublime scenario of scapegoating, but this paper shows us a critic with a nose for pretentiousness, pomposity, excessive investments of complacency and narcissism – the sort of critic one might expect to avoid the literature of the sublime and focus instead on the ironical, the colloquial, the understated.

Perhaps he became a leading theorist of the sublime by accident. Reading his "Reading of Longinus" of 1973, I am struck by the fact that the ultimate focus of this essay is the status of figurative language: the unspeakable that the sublime evokes as it defends against it is the inescapability of figurality. (The inescapability of figurality is developed further in the intricate, multi-stranded arguments of the wonderful later essay, "Freud and the Sandman," also collected in *The End of the Line*.)

But the before pursuing this line, the essay addresses the odd rhetorical strategies of the text by the author whom I shall continue to call Longinus. The sublime, *hypsos*, is defined by Longinus as "a certain excellence and distinction in expression," one that in particular exercises power: "sublime passages exert an irresistible force and mastery and get the upper hand with every listener" (Longinus 100). Or again, "A well-timed stroke of sublimity scatters everything before it like a thunderbolt and in a flash reveals the full power of the speaker." Hertz turns out to be interested less in how this power is achieved than in the way in which Longinus manages seductively to represent this force by transfers of power from one agent to another –from the action of gods or heroes in the passages cited to the action of the poet or the text under consideration. One might even see Hertz's essay as a deconstruction of the sublime, in the sense of an analysis of the way in which its effects are secured by rhetorical reversals; and in fact, he takes as his theoretical starting point not the numerous celebrations of Longinus's critical achievement but what he calls W.K. Wimsatt's "unsympathetic but acute" accusation that Longinus's slide from one distinction to another "seems to harbor a certain duplicity and invalidity" – like the figures Longinus himself analyzes as wonderful aids to the sublime. (End 1)

Hertz's reading of Longinus begins with the demonstration of how the subtle metonymic echoes between one citation and another, which Longinus does not even mention, work to build up a pattern of linkage between the action of gods and heroes on the one hand and the sublime speech acts of poets on the other. After Homeric examples of the battle of the Gods and Poseidon striding over the waves which part for him, the lawgiver of the Jews writes "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." In the next sublime passage, Ajax, bewildered as thickest night blinds the Greek army, cries out "O father Zeus, deliver the sons of the Achaeans out of the mist, make the sky clear, and let us see; in the light kill us." "In this passage," writes Longinus, "it is the real Homer, the gale of whose genius fans the excitement of the battle; the poet [then here are lines from the *Iliad*] Rages like Ares, spear-brandishing, or the deadly fire raging in the mountains, in the thickets of the deepest wood. Foam shows at his mouth" (End, 3-4).

Hertz writes,

> Here in chapter 9 a series of analogies for sublime language is produced: it is like God's creative word, or perhaps only like Moses's echo of that utterance; it is like a heroically risky prayer to father Zeus, it is like a father's elegiac naming of his dead son. We are made

> to feel that somewhere among these versions of the godlike we are entitled to locate the poet's own language, but where? (End 3)

Sappho's ode number 31, "phainetai moi," known only because of Longinus's citation of it, provides a crucial turn for Hertz's argument. This poem has long served as the prime example of the sublime achievement the lyric, with its representation of a speaker (and supposedly the author) powerfully proclaiming the passion by which she seems to be carried away even as she describes it. Longinus presents this as a sublime portrayal of *eros* that selects and combines the most important symptoms, "a congress of emotions, all of which occur with lovers" (115).

> He seems to me equal to the gods that man
> whosoever who opposite you
> sits and listens close
> to your sweet speaking
>
> and lovely laughing –oh it
> puts the heart in my chest on wings
> for when I look at you, even a moment, no speaking
> is left in me
>
> no: tongue breaks and thin
> fire is racing under the skin
> and in eyes no sight and drumming
> fills ears
>
> and cold sweat holds me and shaking
> grips me all, greener than grass
> I am and dead –or almost
> I seem to me.
>
> But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty... (Carson 63).[1]

The articulation of what dramatically happens whenever I catch a glimpse of you produces a striking effect: cast in the present tense, an account of what happens repeatedly impresses us as something happening now, in the performative temporality of the lyric. I would add that it is no accident that Longinus's examples are in the present tense rather than the past, which tells us something about the sublime; this array of examples also marks the centrality of address to sublimity: not only do most of these example involve address, but Longinus at key moments addresses the reader, displaying a performative power of language.

This poem presents not only the paradox of the speechless state of one who elegantly narrates what happens but also a powerful declaration of helplessness, which for Hertz "bring the motifs of violence and risk of death into touch with the rhetorician's theory that an effective poem is an organic unity. For Sappho is introduced as an example of the poet selecting and composing elements so as to 'organize them into a single body'" – only the elements she organizes into the body of her poem "are precisely the names of the fragments of her natural body, seen as the debris of a shattering erotic experience" (End 4-5). Hertz posits that what fascinates Longinus is "the point where the near-fatal stress of passion can be thought of as turning into –as indistinguishable from — the energy that is constituting the poem" (5).

Now there are plenty of examples in the treatise where Longinus himself suggests such a turn – when Demosthenes describes the violence of an aggressor, Longinus writes,

"the orator does just the same as the aggressor; he belabors the judges' minds with blow after blow" (130), and of a particularly dramatic passage about driving a chariot he asks, "Now would you not say that the soul of the poet goes into the chariot with the boy, sharing his danger and joining the horses in their flight?" (122). Some of these comparisons between god or hero and poet can, Hertz notes, "seem merely wishful or glib" (8) But the Sappho example is, I conjecture, more appealing as a model of the sublime –to Hertz as to us – because the narrative of self-scattering or self-loss (rather than self-aggrandizement or heroic display) makes the poetic force more acceptable, and I would suggest, because the first person stages a conversion that is not simply mimetic – not like Demosthenes' forceful words imitating the force of the aggressor's blows. The "I" that is shattered and cannot speak is closely related to the "I" that so eloquently speaks and powerfully performs this passion, but the second is not an imitation of the first.

Hertz explains the transfer of the power of the sublime in a more formal way: Longinus gives us a series of passages, all of which involve an agent (God, hero, natural force, passion, poet,) ferociously acting upon an object (other people, natural objects, body parts, words).

> The turn itself, the transfer of power can take place only if some element can shift its position from one side of the scheme to the other; it is here that we can see how Sappho's ode serves Longinus's purposes, for it is not simply a poem of passion and self-division but one which dramatizes, in a startlingly condensed fashion, the shift from Sappho-as-victimized-body to Sappho-as-poetic-force. (7)

The Sappho example helps Hertz define what he calls "the sublime turn" as "a transfer of power (or the simulation of such a transfer) from the threatening forces to the poetic activity itself." With the Sappho example, "the grounds for comparison are now seen to be not the grandeur of the hero's calling but its ambivalent connections with both violent action and the pathos of self-loss" (8). Sappho's ode provides the signal service, I think, of shifting us away from Homeric moments of grandeur, of gods and heroes, to scenarios of self-loss, and thus makes possible Hertz's later work on the sublime. The essay on Longinus proceeds to other issues,[2] but this early example provides a model with staying power – perhaps, like the power it describes, an irresistible force.

"The Notion of Blockage in the Literature of the Sublime" approaches the subject not through Longinus and heroic poetry but through another *locus classicus*, Kant and the mathematical sublime. For Kant, the sublime involves a dialectical scenario: when we are confronted with the overwhelming excess of a natural force (the dynamical sublime) or an infinite series (the mathematical sublime), there is "a momentary checking of the vital powers," but which leads, as Hertz puts it, "to a compensatory positive movement, the mind's exultation in its own rational faculties, in its ability to think a totality that cannot be taken in through the senses" (End 40). Thus the very failure of imagination to compose what it confronts into a unity discloses a suprasensible faculty of mind –reason –which at a higher level guarantees our spiritual identity.

But a movement away from this traditional sublime is enforced right at the beginning of Hertz's essay, before the end of the very first page, with the move from Kant's sublime example, St. Peters in Rome, to comic contemporary versions of bewilderment and perplexity in the face of excess: the scholar confronting a flood of publications no one can keep up with. This mental overload prompts lurid self-dramatization. Thomas McFarland complains that we are supposed to read broadly but no one can any longer

keep up even with a specialized field, and he offers the no longer so remote fantasy that as the flood of secondary publications increases they "will be programmed into a computer and, as time passes, will be more and more remembered by the computer and forgotten by men"(End 42). The swift initial turn to McFarland is all the more striking and revealing because it is totally unnecessary: Hertz has to hand splendid literary examples of the same structural phenomenon: proliferation leading to bafflement and a spiritual rebound.

> Oh blank confusion! true epitome,
> Of what the mighty City is herself
> To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
> Living amid the same perpetual whirl
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end—
> Oppression, under which even the highest minds
> Must labor, whence the strongest are not free. (End 55)

This is Bartholomew Fair in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (book 7, lines 615-22). This and the Blind Beggar passage from the same book bring Hertz's essay to a triumphant climax, but the structure of the essay adduces them, and also Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" and Thomas Weiskel's *The Romantic Sublime*, in order to help us understand *not* the literary sublime in the lineage of Longinus but the general structure instantiated by the scholar's comical self-loss when confronted with more material than he or she can hope to master. Setting aside St. Peter's for McFarland's bibliography, Hertz brings the logic of the sublime to the most mundane, ubiquitous experiences, providing a subtle but extraordinarily telling critique of the dialectical model of the sublime and empowering reflection on psychological structures of considerable ambiguity and complexity. Analyzing Weiskel's interpretation of the Kantian analytic of the sublime as an Oedipal scenario, he shows how Weiskel's hesitation about whether the mathematical sublime can really be subsumed under the Oedipal dilemma rather than left with the more diffuse anxieties and relations of the pre-Oedipal reveals the scholar himself—Weiskel, like McFarland—*wishing for* a reduction of the serial and the diffuse to a single opposing force that would generate the blockage and the compensatory positive movement:

> The scholar's *wish* is for the moment of blockage, when an indefinite and disarrayed sequence is resolved (at whatever sacrifice) into a one-to-one confrontation, when numerical excess can be converted into that supererogatory identification with the blocking agent that is the guarantor of the self's own integrity as an agent. (53)

The indefinite plurality, threatening to the integrity of the self, is tropologically reduced to a single opposing force which can be recognized in a one-to-one confrontation and give rise to the dialectical recuperation: "although the moment of blockage might have been rendered as one of utter self-loss, it was, even before its recuperation as sublime exaltation, a confirmation of the unitary status of the self." But Hertz shows that this is a specular rather than a dialectical process. The reduction is sought by consciousness to master an epistemological threat to the status and integrity of the subject by misrecognizing it as a structured conflict *between* subjects. The compensatory positive movement of the mind that has been checked is not just a *result* of the confrontation of the sublime but its telos, what the mind was seeking in the first place.

It is the example of the scholar, Weiskel or McFarland, that convincingly demonstrates the wish for a moment of blockage, a one-to-one confrontation, to counter threats of dispersal. We might be less ready to attribute such wishes to sublime poets, who dramatize their predicaments more effectively, but we know that other scholars are self-serving, so we need have no hesitation. Their example deflates and displaces the scenario of the sublime.

This brilliant conversion of the Longinian and Kantian sublime to an economy of the sublime that pervades the most trivial scenarios of the self is the Hertzian sublime. It is an account of the sublime that seems to me an incomparable instrument for understanding a wide range of texts and situations. For me it wonderfully illuminates, for instance, Baudelaire's second "Spleen" from *Les Fleurs du Mal,* which Longinus certainly would not have counted as sublime, despite its oracular accents, because of the deliberate detailing of triviality. How could the scholar's or the poet's messy desk be sublime?

J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans.
Un gros meuble à tiroirs encombré de bilans,
De vers, de billets doux, de procès, de romances,
Avec de lourds cheveux roulés dans les quittances,
Cache moins de secrets que mon triste cerveau.
C'est une pyramide, un immense caveau,
Qui contient plus de morts que la fosse commune.
— Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune,
Où comme des remords se traînent de longs vers
Qui s'acharnent toujours sur mes morts les plus chers.
Je suis un vieux boudoir plein de roses fanées,
Où gît tout un fouillis de modes surannées,
Où les pastels plaintifs et les pâles Boucher,
Seuls, respirent l'odeur d'un flacon débouché.

Rien n'égale en longueur les boiteuses journées.
Quand sous les lourds flocons de neigeuses années
L'ennui, fruit de la morne incuriosité,
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité.
— Désormais tu n'es plus, ô matière vivante!
Qu'un granit entouré d'une vague épouvante,
Assoupi dans le fond d'un Sahara brumeux;
Un vieux sphinx ignoré du monde insoucieux,
Oublié sur la carte, et dont l'humeur farouche
Ne chante qu'aux rayons du soleil qui se couche. (73)

Spleen

I have more memories than had I seen
Ten centuries. A huge chest that has been
Stuffed full of writs, bills, verses, balance-sheets
With golden curls wrapt up in old receipts
And love-letters — hides less than my sad brain,
A pyramid, a vault that must contain
More corpses than the public charnel stores.
I am a cemetery the moon abhors,
Where, like remorses, the long worms that trail
Always the dearest of my dead assail.
I am a boudoir full of faded roses

Where many an old outmoded dress reposes
And faded pastels and pale Bouchers only
Breathe a scent-flask, long-opened and left lonely...
Nothing can match those limping days for length
Where under snows of years, grown vast in strength,
Boredom (of listlessness the pale abortion)
Of immortality takes the proportion!
— From henceforth, living matter, you are nought
But stone surrounded by a dreadful thought:
Lost in some dim Sahara, an old Sphinx,
Of whom the world we live in never thinks.
Lost on the map, it is its surly way
Only to sing in sunset's fading ray. (trans. Roy Campbell)

This poem begins with the predicament of a subject overwhelmed by, unable to find itself in, an excess of memories – a familiar, prosaic condition. These memories or secrets, as the opening lines call them, characterizing their heterogeneity by comparison with the contents of a huge desk — registers or balance sheets, verses, love letters, legal papers, romances, locks of hair wrapped in receipts — are a mass of writings of different sorts which *could* be thought of as richness but which is experienced as excessive or oppressive, unmasterable as the experience of a subject. The equivalences established transform this heterogeneous series of texts into equivalent instances of an absence of life: the indistinguishable serial corpses of the common grave, "les morts de la fosse commune." The mind is a tomb that contains more dead than the common grave, and then, in a gothic image supposed to make this a more awful condition, seeking to generate some of the energy of the sublime, "Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune." The extra touch of a cemetery so dreadful even the moon abhors it gives us an agent, the moon, set against the cemetery and thus unifies the indeterminate dead of the common grave into a single lugubrious figure— the abhorred graveyard.

The movement here is one of self-loss: as the memories become dead, *ennui* takes over, acquiring immortal dimensions. And, as this disproportionate *ennui* blots out possibilities of interest, the self, further depersonalized and addressed just as "living matter" is identified with a granite monument forgotten in the desert.

How can we account for the fact that this poem, with its radical depersonal-ization, can strike such a posture of rhetorical exuberance? Hertz's model tells us that when consciousness is confronted with a mass of materials that it cannot take in, the cognitive overload produces a blockage, a "checking of the vital powers," an experience of being overwhelmed. But this focusing of the mind on its inability to comprehend produces a turn: the mind "sinks back into itself," exultant at its own confrontation with excess, with the blocking agent. The moment of blockage is rendered as one of utter self-loss, but since the "indefinite and disarrayed sequence" has been resolved into a one-to-one confrontation, the identification with the blocking agent becomes a guarantee "of the self's own integrity as an agent," a confirmation of the unitary status of the self (End 53). Here, the proliferation of memories and writings that posed the treat to the integrity of the subject has been resolved into a single object, the sphinx. Identification with the sphinx is presented, of course, as tragedy, not triumph: the sphinx is ignored, forgotten, and its ill humor sings only in or to the rays of the setting sun. But with the resolution of heterogeneous excess into a single figure the problem has been altered and simplified. No longer is it a question of what becomes of the self among this excess of discourses

and experiences that cannot be mastered or integrated — a condition more frustrating, even ridiculous, than tragic. The problem is now focused on a figure of considerable pathos: the lurid figure of a sphinx forgotten in a desert, singing to the setting sun, where the element of song suggests a certain value, even a grouchy pleasure or pride in one's irritated isolation, *l'humeur farouche* of an agent whose identity is assured — which assurance helps to account for the rhetorical energy of the poem.

There is consolation in the lurid, highly dramatized conditions of deprivation — "Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune" or "Désormais tu n'es plus, O matière vivante/ Qu'un granit entouré d'une vague épouvante" — consolations linked to the solidity of an isolated self. Those supposedly catastrophic totalizations offer escape from the more banal and unsettling predicament of confronting a hopelessly messy desk, or an endless series of memories that cannot be integrated or — to move from the situation of the speaker to that of the reader — of coming upon potential patterns, hearing echoes, without being able to decide whether they signify or not.

Elsewhere I have taken this poem to illustrate a modernist model of lyric as a drama of consciousness, transforming reality by acts of consciousness, so that value comes to inhere not in the objects of consciousness but in the process –a model that provides strategies for coping with what we call modernity (Culler). The lyric works to construct a subject — the subject one constructs to read a lyric, the subject one overhears — in the face of all the threats of dispersal and incoherence that the lyrics themselves explore.

This scenario of blockage and compensatory affirmation of the self can be translated into what Hertz calls the "end of the line" structure, diagrammed as the T on its side, in the Afterword to *The End of the Line*. The horizontal axis, the shaft of the T, is the axis of a play of identification and distancing between subject and the objects generated through the scenarios of blockage, which function as surrogates for the subject. The crossbar of the T represents a splitting or doubling of that object that figures a minimal difference: a minimal difference whose function is to stabilize, even momentarily, the difference between subject and object. In the Blind Beggar passage from the *Prelude*, Wordsworth, as represented by his surrogate in the poem, moves through the chaos of London and is brought to a halt, baffled, before the beggar, whose fascination, Hertz argues, lies in the minimal difference between the label on his chest telling who he was and the "fixed face and sightless eyes." (End 218).

> My mind did at this spectacle turn round
> As with the might of waters, and it seemed
> To me that in this Label was a type
> Or emblem, of the utmost that we know,
> Both of ourselves and of the universe;
> And on the shape of the unmoving man,
> His fixèd face and sightless eyes, I looked
> As though admonish'd from another world. (Book 7, lines 615-22)

The difference between what the speaker can read on the label and see in the face is minimal but it is a fixed difference. In its minimal fixity, as emblem of minimal difference, it reestablishes a boundary and, Hertz writes, establishing a minimal demarcation, between Wordsworth writing and Wordsworth written, for instance, works to separate poet from his double and "keeps the poet-impresario from tumbling into his text" (60). This resolutely non-dialectical structure focuses on a point of opacity, a minimal

differentiation, that helps establish the integrity of the subject that textual representation, self-reflexivity and doubling had threatened to break down.

In Baudelaire's second "Spleen," pushing to the end of the line, we follow the sublime consolidation of the indefinite series into the figure of the Sphinx, the figure with whom the speaker claims to identify, and with whom, by virtue of the address to "tu" (you) the reader might momentarily identify also; but the invocation "Désormais tu n'es plus, o matiere vivante, / Qu'un granit, entouré d'une vague épouvante," the address to living matter that is also a piece of stone, splits the Sphinx into a minimal difference: the singing Sphinx is both living matter and granite, and then, since "oublié sur la carte" arguably means both left off the map and forgotten and written down on the map and forgotten, the Sphinx also splits into a Sphinx written down and a Sphinx not written down.[3] The minimal divisions between the animate and inanimate and written /not written make this identification the end of the line in Baudelaire's hyperbolic sublime.

We are accustomed to sublime scenarios of epic or lyric, though Hertz has taught us to interpret them much more skillfully and profoundly. We had not been accustomed to sublime scenarios in nineteenth century novels or in the vicissitudes of academic life. But now we are, thanks to *The End of the Line* and *George Eliot's Pulse*. The Hertzian sublime has become a fundamental articulation, a ubiquitous structure for making sense of experience in general and exploring the psychological complexities of the self's relation to the objects that it invests.

One difference between these cases, I would say, is that unlike the sublime of lyric, the moments of the prosaic sublime do not come at the end of the texts in which they figure, and typically, Hertz observes, the momentary equilibrium of the end of the line structure breaks down and gives way to violent scenarios of scapegoating in which "the aggressive reassertion of the subject's stability is bought at some other subject's expense" (End 223). In the case of the pamphlet on plagiarism cited earlier, where for the student who "gets away with it" "the corruptness of his act, the disloyalty and baseness it entails, must inevitably leave an ineradicable mark upon him," Hertz takes up this morally-indignant and complacently high-minded fantasy of the inevitable ineradicable mark that separates once and for all the plagiarizing goat from the dutifully acknowledging sheep. This sublime scenario is a compensatory one, whereby those who make their living by articulating in their classes ideas which cannot all be uniquely their own manage to focus their anxieties about the intertextual nature of writing and language in general on a scapegoat. The huff and puff of this language is designed precisely to project an internal division or difference *within*, where one cannot be sure which ideas are one's own and which are not, into a difference *between*: between the virtuous and the base, the institution and its stigmatized member. Here, as Hertz notes in an elegant turn, "in one of those nice economical turns that characterize powerful fantasies, the delinquent member is himself made to unwillingly represent an emblem of integrity, of the binding of self and its signs" (the ineradicable mark which makes his character legible) (End 149).

In *George Eliot's Pulse*, investigating the continuities between the sublime passages of romantic texts and passages in Eliot's novels, Hertz works much as Longinus does, linking salient passages that turn out to have points in common and facilitating transfers of agency, by marking particular characters as authorial surrogates in dramas of representation or of scapegoating that ultimately bear on powers of fictional agency and writing. And here it is Sappho 31 that serves as illustration of the possible connection between the poetic sublime and novelistic scenarios: there is a transfer of power, he writes,

> from the force impinging on Sappho (when she is seen as a victimized body) to the force deployed by Sappho (when she is admired as a poet)…Sappho's physical fragmentation, her coming near to dying under the stress of overwhelming force, underwrites her activity as a shaper of language and aligns her poem with the *Iliad*, where, Longinus tells us, Homer "forces his prepositions," "tortures and crushes his words," and "stamps his diction" with a particular character. Something very similar, I believe, can be detected in Eliot's dealings with a series of put-upon women: the evidence of their agency (or lack thereof) –of their passive suffering or active (or fantasized) aggression –is linked to signs of the impingement of force on a receptive surface, either to the marks left on a receptive surface or to the forced fragmentation of the surface itself, the breaking down of larger into smaller units. (7).

I do not have time to explore these brilliant and resourceful readings of passages in Eliot taken as allegories of fictional agency, in which the pairing of characters and the endowing them with novelistic attributes creates scenarios that get invested with a great deal of moral force even —and perhaps especially— at moments when the frailty of such vessels is being emphasized. Thus a passage in *Daniel Deronda* about Gweldolen's desire to have a career, with which the great eponymous essay of the book, "George Eliot's Pulse," concludes, is redolent with visionary comparisons, and "seeks its force," Hertz writes, "by conjuring up effects of force" (earthquakes, armies, thunder, martyrs, chariots of flame), while Gwendolen herself feels "reduced to a mere speck" (17). The idiom of the sublime here, Hertz writes, "its language of impingement, inscription and scattering, relocates the question of Gwendolen's fate in another register, one in which the adjustment of her 'punishment' to her 'crime' is replaced by her allegorization as at once the dangerously chancy producer of writing and the target of its unrelenting force" (19). She is a supremely unlikely Sappho, I would say, but Hertz writes, "the resonance of that equivocal allegory is the pulse one catches in George Eliot's fiction."

But Hertz the ironist, the deflator of heightened language, should be allowed the last word: "To call attention to end-of-the line structures then, is no more than one way –one somewhat excited way – of talking about what happens when one reads" (End 222). Long live the somewhat excited way!

Cornell University, USA

Notes

[1] In line two of Anne Carson's translation (from *If Not Winter*) I have modified "whoever he is," to "whosoever," based on arguments by Winkler (179).

[2] This is just the first of three sections of the essay. The last two take up the question of the deceptiveness of figurative langauge and its relationship to the sublime, a matter on which Longinus spends considerable time. On the way, Hertz finds more evidence that the sublime involves mortals trying to capture for their language some of the power of the divine by self-

binding or self-sacrifice, in what can be seen as a movement of disintegration and figurative reconstruction; but Longinus's concern that sublime rhetoric plays trick by means of figures leads to a different reflection, about the concealment or revelation of the figurativeness of figures. Instead of treating the sublime as created by figures, Longinus sees figures and the sublime as aiding each other: "sublimity and emotion are a defense and a wonderful aid against the suspicion which the use of figures engenders. The artifice of the trick is lost to sight in the surrouding brilliance of beauty and grandeur, and it escapes all suspicion" (End 17). Demosthenes concealed the figurality of figure, Longinus avers, "by sheer brilliance. As fainter lights disappear when the sunshine surrounds them, so the sophisms of rhetoric are dimmed when they are enveloped in encircling grandeur" Hertz reads in Longinus that when figurative language is concealed, it may sustain the truthful, the natural, the masterful, and so on; but when it is revealed, it is always revealed as false" (18). But our reading of the sublime, which found it to be dependent on the rhetorical structures of his own critical discourse, reveals a certain figurality, so we cannot ourselves identify the sublime with the concealment of figurality. Hertz concludes that we are drawn to characterize as sublime literary texts that afford a powerful apprehension of language's "peculiar agility in moving between the two poles," which may be variously named (End 19).

[3] It is Paul de Man who suggests that "oublié sur la carte" may mean written down on the map and therefore forgotten: the sphinx is "inaccessible to memory because he is imprinted on paper, because he is himself the inscription of a sign" (xxv). See also Cynthia Chase, 131-2.

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The Logic of Adventure: Marlow's Moral Malady in *Lord Jim*

RAFE MCGREGOR

What are we to make of Charles Marlow, Joseph Conrad's alter ego, in *Lord Jim*, the modernist novel published at the height of Britannia's rule of the waves? In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is sensitive to the suffering of the colonised and deeply critical of the colonial project, but his narration of *Lord Jim* betrays casual privilege and enthusiastic complicity in imperial hegemony. I suggest that a more comprehensive understanding of Marlow's attitude to colonialism can be achieved by reading *Heart of Darkness* in relation to its two most faithful adaptations, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and James Brabazon's *The Break Line*.

I

Charles Marlow, an officer in the British Merchant Service, is the narrator of four of Conrad's works: "Youth" (1898), a short story; *Heart of Darkness* (1898), a novella; and the novels *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Chance* (1913).[1] Strictly speaking all four are narrated by Conrad as "Youth", *Heart of Darkness*, and *Chance* are embedded in meta-fictions where Marlow tells a tale of the sea to a small circle of intimates that includes the self-effacing author and *Lord Jim* is narrated by the author in the third person. In each case, however, the point of view from which the narrative is presented is almost exclusively Marlow's. There is a neat juxtaposition between *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, with the former involving Marlow following the physical and psychological path pioneered by his senior, Kurtz, and the latter involving Marlow attempting to establish a young protégé, Jim, in order that he can pursue his own physical and psychological path.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is appointed captain of a steamship for a Continental commercial concern operating in the Congo Free State, a colony that was ruled personally by King Leopold II of Belgium (rather than by the Belgian government) from 1885 to 1908 and in which atrocities were the norm rather than the exception. Marlow describes his arrival in-country with multiple images of senseless destruction and wanton cruelty. His first encounter with Africans is a chain gang, followed by a group of forced labourers: 'Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair' (34-35). The situation does not improve when he reaches the company's Central Station and he is almost universally critical of his colleagues, whom he refers to ironically as 'pilgrims' (44), representing themselves as bringing civilisation to Africa while stripping the continent of its natural resources for profit. Marlow's point of view establishes a narrative framework in which colonialism is not only bad for Africans, but bad for Europeans, enabling and encouraging the exercise of arbitrary

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authority, the satisfaction of desire without restraint, and insidious moral corruption (McGregor 90). In contemporary terminology, Marlow is a white supremacist, like the vast majority of Britons and Europeans at the time of publication, but he nonetheless recognises the full humanity of the Africans and the immorality of the colonial project that subjects them to suffering in the name of commerce.

In his famous essay on racism in *Heart of Darkness*, Chinua Achebe takes Conrad to task for portraying Africa as 'a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest' (1784). Achebe expands this criticism in response to a student who suggests that Africa in the novella is merely a stage for the mental and moral disintegration of Kurtz: 'Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind?' (1790). Whether or not this criticism is fair of *Heart of Darkness*, it provides an accurate description of Marlow's attitude to Britain's colonies in *Lord Jim*. Marlow meets the eponymous protagonist of the novel while the latter is on trial for abandoning a ship of which he was chief mate. Marlow feels sorry for Jim, whose promising career in the Merchant Service has been ruined by a momentary failure of physical courage, and takes him under his wing. Marlow's assistance involves Jim setting himself up in imitation of Kurtz in Patusan, a fictional country in the South China Sea. Jim arrives in-country as the manager of Stein & Co.'s trading post, but accedes to his lordship by a combination of martial and mental prowess. In contrast to Kurtz, Jim's rule is benevolent, but maritime Southeast Asia is nonetheless portrayed by Marlow as a prop for Jim to regain his self-confidence, exert his agency, and realise his potential. Marlow is, when compared to the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, more casual and more callous about the lives of the colonised and an enthusiastic participant in the imperial system that facilitates Jim's self-actualisation in virtue of his whiteness.

The Marlow of *Lord Jim* is, furthermore, confident that his complicity in the colonial project has not tainted him morally, stating of his homecomings: '"Say what you like, to get its joy, to breathe its peace, to face its truth, one must return with a clear conscience"' (170). The Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* is much less assured of his moral cleanliness and provides a justification of both his participation in the colonial project and his employment in the Congo Free State. The lengthy passage begins with:

> "Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there." (21-22)

Marlow then describes his fascination with the biggest white space (Africa) and, within that space, the biggest river (Congo River):

> "But there was on it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window it fascinated me as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird." (22)

Marlow's justification opens Conrad up to Achebe's accusation of racism by representing Africa as a 'a white patch for a [white] boy to dream over' (Conrad 22), but is nonetheless

indicative of Marlow's need to explain his participation in the colonial project. This explanation is absent in *Lord Jim*, where Marlow is content to send Jim to one of these white spaces despite being aware of the harm he may cause.

Both of the adaptations of *Heart of Darkness* with which I am concerned include similar first-person justifications by the protagonists for their participation in the respective enterprises (an assassination in both cases). In *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Benjamin L. Willard (played by Martin Sheen) is a captain in the 82nd Airborne Division serving in the Second Indochina War and assigned to Special Operations. Willard is ordered to kill Walter E. Kurtz (played by Marlon Brando), a colonel in the 5th Special Forces Group who has set himself up as the absolute ruler of a Highlander tribe in Cambodia and severed contact with the United States Army.[2] Like Marlow, Willard must reach Kurtz by boat, travelling up the fictional Nùng River. There are three versions of *Apocalypse Now* currently available: the original, one hundred and fifty-three minutes long and released in 1979; *Apocalypse Now Redux*, an extended version of two hundred and two minutes released in 2001; and *Apocalypse Now: Final Cut*, which is one hundred and eighty-three minutes long and was released in 2019. I shall take the *Final Cut* as the definitive version and should be taken as referring to the *Final Cut* unless explicitly referring to one of the other two versions. All three versions are narrated by Willard in a voiceover and begin with him in a hotel room in Saigon, awaiting orders from Special Operations headquarters. As two soldiers walk up the stairs to his room, Willard justifies his work for Special Operations: 'Everyone gets everything he wants. I wanted a mission and for my sins they gave me one. Brought it up to me like room service. It was a real choice mission and when it was over I'd never want another' (*Final Cut* 07:38-08:04). War is a carnival for Willard, a time of totality in which social norms and values are suspended and subordinated to a new order of absolute freedom, an order in which *everyone gets everything he wants* (Bakhtin 7). As in war, the beginning and end of carnival are publicly announced and while 'the usual world order is suspended, the new utopian order which has come to replace it is sovereign and embraces all' (Bakhtin 259). The description of this new order as *utopian* seems problematic in wartime and I shall return to this apparent paradox in the final part of this essay.

The Break Line (2018) is authored by James Brabazon, a British war correspondent and documentary filmmaker. The novel is a work of genre fiction, a contemporary thriller that adapts *Apocalypse Now* while returning the setting to West Africa, specifically the Republic of Sierra Leone.[3] Maxwell McLean is a major in The Unknown (UKN), a fictional British Special Operations unit that fulfils a role in between United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF) and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6). *The Break Line* begins with a prologue in which McLean is recruited to UKN in 1994 and is followed by three chapters describing the culmination of a mission to Venezuela in 2017. The central plot begins in the fourth chapter, where McLean is ordered to kill an unidentified white man who is believed to be either former or current Russian Federation Special Forces, has raised a rebel army, launched successful raids in both Sierra Leone and Guinea, and poses a threat to the stability of the region. The target, whom McLean refers to as '"Mr Kurtz"' (44), is based in a military camp near the fictional outpost of Karabunda, in Sierra Leone's Northern Province. Immediately after the interview, McLean addresses the reader directly, offering a brief, but nonetheless compelling justification of his mission: 'I sat up front in silence, running over the known-knowns of the job so far – which boiled down to this: I'd get one shot, at one man, to stop a war' (50).

II

Apocalypse Now starts with the image of a wall of palm trees. A helicopter flies past, followed by the sound of the first chords of The Doors' "The End" (1967). Instead of opening credits, Coppola employs a montage of images that fade in and out, alternating between two flashforwards (to an air assault on a Vietnamese village and a religious statue in Kurtz's compound) and a closeup of Willard's face as he lies in bed smoking a cigarette (Ebert 29). Just over three and a half minutes later, the camera tracks across Willard's personal effects, the sound of the helicopters segues into the sound of a ceiling fan, and Willard opens his eyes to stare at it. Margot Norris provides a pithy description of Coppola as beginning 'the film in the interior of Willard's spiritual and psychological heart of darkness expressed in visual images and techniques' (735). The voiceover begins when Willard looks out of his hotel window and the scene continues for just over three minutes, during which Willard, drunk and distraught, smashes a mirror, pours the remains of a bottle of cognac down his throat, and sobs inconsolably. When the two soldiers from Special Operations arrive in the next scene, they find him hungover – naked, bloody, and confused – and have to drag him into a cold shower to wake him up. In short, Willard as he first appears onscreen is a psychological wreck, barely fit for peacetime let alone Special Operations duties in wartime.

Willard arrives at Special Operations headquarters, where he is first interviewed and then ordered (in terms that are vague enough for his superiors to be able to deny subsequent responsibility) to kill Kurtz. Willard is clean-shaven, smartly turned-out, and attendant to military etiquette, but taciturn to the point of timidity and one once again wonders why he has been selected for such an important mission. In the following scenes, he takes passage on a United States Navy river patrol boat, witnesses an airborne raid on a village, watches a Playboy centrefold show turn into a riot, and spends most of his journey reading dossiers on Kurtz. Willard as depicted in the first half of the film is a passenger, an observer, a researcher. The only evidence of any agency on his part is when he uses force to coerce a quartermaster into providing the boat crew with fuel, but his superior rank and the legitimacy of the request quickly win the day, requiring little exertion. When Chief George Phillips (played by Albert Hall), commander of the patrol boat, orders the crew to prepare for the routine stop of a Vietnamese sampan, Willard (who outranks him) tells him that his mission takes priority. Phillips replies, 'Until we reach your destination, Captain, you just on for the ride' (*Final Cut* 84:19-21). Phillips stops the sampan and one of his crew – all of whom are very nervous – checks the papers of the occupants, which are in order. For reasons that remain opaque, Phillips instructs the sailor to search the sampan and when a Vietnamese woman rushes towards him to save her puppy, the other two sailors panic and rake all of the Vietnamese with automatic fire, killing everyone except the woman, who is badly wounded. Phillips tells the sailors to bring her aboard so that they can take her to a hospital. Willard, who has been calmly putting on his boots while all this has been happening, walks up to Phillips and asks him what he is doing. Phillips responds, but Willard kills the woman with a single shot from his pistol and and says: 'I told you not to stop – now let's go' (*Final Cut*: 88:14-16).

Willard's action, his first exercise of agency in the film, occurs at the precise halfway point. John Yorke (58-59 & 135-140) identifies the halfway point in the template used by big budget Hollywood productions as crucial to both the overarching plot and the development of the character of the protagonist. With respect to the former, the sequence

in the middle of the film signals the point of no return from which the conclusion of the narrative (in this case, Kurtz's murder) is inevitable. With respect to the latter, the turning point is where the story changes from being driven by what the protagonist wants to what the protagonist needs. What Willard wants is a mission to give his life meaning, but what he needs is to exercise his agency and create the meaning in and of his life for himself. Willard's character flaw is that he is not a fully-autonomous agent but an automaton of the agency of others, whose orders he follows and whose meanings he appropriates. Further evidence for the significance of Willard's agency to the narrative can be found by comparing the midpoint of the *Final Cut* with the midpoints of the original release and *Redux*. In both cases, the sequence involves Willard narrating rather than acting, reading Kurtz's letter to his son in the former (*Apocalypse Now* 69:33-71:07) and empathising with Kurtz in the latter (*Redux* 94:00-33). The focus in the previous versions is thus on Willard in relation to Kurtz as opposed to Willard himself. In order to achieve autonomy, Willard will have to create meaning by freely exerting his agency – and this is precisely what he does at the conclusion of the film.[4] Willard in the final ten minutes of the film is barely recognisable from the character introduced in the first ten minutes: having weighed up whether or not to follow his orders, he decides to kill Kurtz; infiltrates his quarters; hacks him to death with a machete; confronts the entire Highlander tribe; and sets off downriver with the only surviving sailor. *The Final Cut* structures the narrative around the development of Willard's autonomy from beginning to middle to end, from an agent without a mission to an agent on someone else's mission to taking ownership of the mission and completing it on his own terms.

III

Like Coppola, Brabazon is concerned with the exercise of his protagonist's agency and McLean makes explicit reference to agency in his narration. In the following passage, McLean describes the experience of regaining consciousness:

> Nothing.
> Pure, absolute void.
> No shadow.
> No echo.
> An eternity of emptiness in endless grey.
> It's not that I can't remember. I haven't *forgotten*. I was neither unconscious nor dead.
> I just simply *wasn't*: being without agency.
> Perhaps that's how we live in the womb until we are ripped into the world, awoken by human voices, drowning in the oxygen of existence. (292)

McLean has been drugged by his father and Brabazon delivers a dramatic two-stage anagnorisis in which McLean discovers first that the target of his mission is his father, whom he thought dead, and second, that the rebel army protects a Russian Federation laboratory in which his father has created a 'shapestrong' (285), an evolutionary throwback manufactured by the combination of exposure to filoviruses and chemical stimulation of the immune system. Unlike Willard, McLean neither waives his agency nor experiences any significant psychological conflict in the performance of his missions. Both men are soldiers who follow orders, but where Willard is an automaton, an instrument of the agency of his military superiors, McLean does so self-consciously, adhering to a code of conduct that he has devised himself, that he has freely chosen to follow, and that he

reaffirms in the exercise of his agency on each mission. Here, he explains his code of conduct to Major General King, the Director Special Forces (UKSF):

> "Kristóf," I said cautiously, "I've killed a of people. For you, for Commander Knight, for my men. For my country." Suddenly I could hear the trace of my Irish accent, hard like so many stones clattering between us. "*This* country." I looked at the bookshelf, his mother, the ribbon, and shrugged with my hands open. "But I've never killed for me. I've killed because I've been told to. Sure, sometimes I've wanted to kill. But I never did. I never killed for me." (32)

McLean is completely self-aware, conscious of the moral and psychological cost of both his chosen profession and his personal code of conduct within that profession:

> Killing people in cold blood without question because I was ordered to might have made me a "legally sane psychopath"; killing people when I thought I knew they were innocent made me, at best, a sociopath – a sociopath who followed orders. History hadn't judged that sort too well.[5] (54-55)

McLean is clear that he can accept being a psychopath but not a sociopath and this self-knowledge appears to inoculate him from the anguish, despair, and demoralisation that torment Willard in the opening scene of *Apocalypse Now*. McLean's reaffirmation of his commitment to UKN by means of the exercise of his agency involves a series of conscious choices and the fact that these are freely made is revealed in the final chapter, where he confronts his superiors in order to expose a traitor. McLean is prepared, if necessary, to kill whichever one of General King, Commander Knight, and David Mason (a director general in MI6) has betrayed him. He is not an automaton of the agency of others because he neither follow his orders blindly, nor follows orders for the sake of following orders, nor follows orders for the purpose of finding meaning. McLean creates his own meaning through his missions, taking self-reflexive ownership of their aims and objectives while exercising his agency in full.

Conrad's concern with Marlow's agency is most obvious in the short story "Youth", in which Marlow tells the tale of his first voyage to the 'Eastern seas' (115).[6] His ship, the *Judea*, is commissioned to transport coal from Tyne to Bangkok, but the voyage is beset by a series of problems from the very beginning. Shortly after entering the Atlantic, her beams begin opening and the crew are required to operate the pumps continuously in order to prevent her from sinking. Marlow comments:

> "And there was somewhere in me the thought: By Jove! this is the deuce of an adventure – something you read about; and it is my first voyage as second mate – and I am only twenty – and here I am lasting it out as well as any of these men, and keeping my chaps up to the mark. I was pleased. I would not have given up the experience for worlds." (123)

The young Marlow is entirely selfish, taking pleasure in meeting the challenge thrown at him without consideration for the pain of others or the potential for loss of life. He regards the dangerous circumstances and his relationship with the crew as an opportunity to test his strength of character, to create his own agency, and to realise his potential as a fully-autonomous agent. The *Judea* reaches sanctuary in Falmouth and after some delay sets off for Bangkok again. Several weeks after entering the Indian Ocean, Marlow discovers that the cargo of coals has caught alight. The *Judea* is assisted by a steamer, the *Sommerville*, which tows her, but the blaze breaks out in earnest, forcing the crew to abandon ship. The captain declines an offer of rescue from the *Sommerville* in order to

salvage as much from the *Judea* as possible and the property is transferred to three boats, with Marlow given command of the smallest. When the *Judea* sinks, the three boats are well over one hundred miles from the nearest land, the Indonesian island of Java, but Marlow is delighted by the captain's decision to risk the lives of his crew unnecessarily because it means he will arrive in the East as the commander of his own vessel, a 'cockleshell' (145).

Marlow is in fact so desperate to exercise his agency that he seeks a way to quit the other boats, notwithstanding the risks involved and his responsibility for the lives of his crew of two:

> "And do you know what I thought? I thought I would part company as soon as I could. I wanted to have my first command all to myself. I wasn't going to sail in squadron if there were a chance for independent cruising. I would make land by myself. I would beat the other boats." (144)

Like McLean, Marlow is not above disobeying orders. Ignoring the captain's instruction to stay together, he sails far ahead of the other two and is pleased when he is cut off from them by a rainsquall. Marlow literally revels in the consequent unrestrained exercise of agency and the exultation which that exercise brings:

> "I remember the drawn faces, the dejected figures of my two men, and I remember my youth and the feeling that will never come back any more – the feeling that I could last for ever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men; the deceitful feeling that lures us on to joys, to perils, to love, to vain effort – to death; the triumphant conviction of strength, the heat of life in the handful of dust, the glow in the heart that with every year grows dim, grows cold, grows small, and expires – and expires, too soon, too soon – before life itself." (146)

All three boats reach the safety of a small port and Marlow's agency is ultimately not exercised at the expense of his crew though he has of course employed their lives as a means to the end of the exercise of his agency. Narrating the story to his friends two decades later, Marlow is self-reflective but unapologetic, attributing his self-centred actions solely to his age, to 'silly, charming, beautiful youth' (144), and entreating his audience to accept this justification by asking them 'wasn't that the best time, that time when we were young at sea' (151). The significance of the exercise of agency in *Apocalypse Now*, *The Break Line*, and "Youth" suggests that Marlow's complicity in imperial hegemony in *Lord Jim* may be explained by his construction of colonialism as a means to the end of Jim creating (or perhaps recreating) his own agency and realising his potential as a fully-autonomous agent. Indeed, Achebe's criticism expressed in terms of agency provides a compelling explanation for Marlow's indifference to the fate of the colonised in *Lord Jim*. What it does not explain, however, is the apparent change in Marlow from his narration of *Heart of Darkness* to his narration of *Lord Jim*.

IV

The most convincing explanation of Marlow's moral malady is concealed in two other texts, in the first minute and a half of Willard's voiceover in *Apocalypse Now* and in the last seven lines of *The Break Line*. The voiceover, during which Willard sets fire to a photograph of his wife with the end of his cigarette, is as follows:

> Saigon. Shit. I'm still only in Saigon. Every time, I think I'm gonna wake up back in the jungle. When I was home after my first tour it was worse. I'd wake up and there'd

> be nothing. I hardly said a word to my wife until I said yes to a divorce. When I was here I wanted to be there, when I was there all I could think of was getting back into the jungle. I'm here a week now…waiting for a mission, getting softer. Every minute I stay in this room I get weaker, and every minute Charlie squats in the bush he gets stronger. (04:19-05:48)

The key to understanding the characters of Willard, McLean, and Marlow lies in the sentence *when I was here I wanted to be there, when I was there all I could think of was getting back into the jungle*. In other words, when Willard is on a mission, he longs for home, but when he's at home, he longs for a mission – in consequence of which neither satisfy him. Within the context of the narration, cinematography, and acting in the opening scene of *Apocalypse Now*, this confession is an admission by Willard of his addiction to Special Operations work. The latest *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) published by the American Psychiatric Association does not use 'addiction' as a clinical term, but employs 'substance use disorder' instead (485). The manual recognises the existence of '*behavioral addictions*', but does not include them due to the insufficiency of scientific evidence at the time of publication (481). The category 'Other (or Unknown) Substance Use Disorder' lists eleven diagnostic criteria (577-578), at least eight of which are applicable to Willard if one replaces 'substance' with 'behaviour': persistent desire to cut down the behaviour; significant amount of time spent on either the behaviour or recovery; strong desire for the behaviour; consequent failure to fulfil obligations at home; continued behaviour in spite of persistent interpersonal problems; consequent abandoning of important social or recreational activities; continued behaviour in spite of persistent psychological problems; and withdrawal. Willard does not just want a mission, he is addicted to his missions. He is in Vietnam, in the Army, and in Special Operations because, in the carnival of war, *everyone gets everything he wants* – and he knows he will get a mission. This is the sense in which, for all the psychological distress it produces, war is Willard's utopia, providing his empty existence with the purpose it lacks in peacetime.

In the previous part of this essay, I mentioned Brabazon's dramatic use of anagnorisis in the revelation of first the identity of McLean's enemy and then the true stakes of the mission. *The Break Line* concludes with an even more dramatic self-reflexive revelation by McLean. In the sentence immediately preceding the passage I quoted, where he is considering the moral cost of his code of conduct in terms of the distinction between a psychopath and sociopath, McLean states 'I knew, too, that was the beginning of the end' (54), by which he announces his intention to resign from UKN once his mission to Sierra Leone is completed. This confidence is followed by the revelation that his target is his father, his autonomous choice to destroy his father's work, and his witnessing of his father's violent death. The combination of McLean's reservations with the events that occur during the mission leave one in no doubt that McLean will leave UKSF as soon as he has exposed the traitor. In the final lines of the novel, however, Brabazon combines anagnorisis with peripeteia, a twist in the tail of the tale as McLean suffers a moral reversal of fortune while quarantining himself:

> I pulled hard at the oars and set my course for the wilderness of the lake islands. My little boat beat against the current. Forty days, my father had said – after which I would get back to doing what I did best.
>
> Killing was my life.
>
> Anything that happened before or after was just waiting. (374)

This is also an admission of addiction, to killing, and a decision to stop being concerned about the moral cost of giving in to that addiction. Willard is tormented because he knows the behaviour to which he is addicted is psychologically harmful, but cannot stop himself from engaging in it regardless. McLean's code of conduct provides him with protection against the psychological and moral pitfalls, but when those protections fail, he embraces rather than rejects his addiction. In *Apocalypse Now*, one sees Willard smoking, staggering, sobbing, thinking, drinking, and dreaming, but what one is really seeing is Willard waiting…*waiting for a mission, getting softer*. *The Break Line* ends where *Apocalypse Now* begins, with McLean beginning his forty days and forty nights of waiting…waiting for the next mission.

In the same way that Willard and McLean are addicted to killing so the character upon which they are both based, Marlow, is addicted to adventure – not just the adventure afforded by the sea, but the adventure afforded by being a British sailor at the peak of Britannia's rule of the waves, the holder of an office in the preponderant global power. "Youth" is littered with descriptions of the excitement, exhilaration, and euphoria of adventure, of the thrill of confronting dangerous seas and travelling to exotic locations, several of which I quoted in the previous part of this essay. Like his successors, however, Marlow knows that this lifestyle is fraught with moral and psychological danger. Where "Youth" focuses on the pleasures of a life of adventure, *Heart of Darkness* focuses on its pitfalls, exemplified in both Kurtz's life and Marlow's reflections. Edward Said refers to this self-awareness in Marlow, Jim, and Kurtz when he writes that 'Conrad's heroes, afflicted as they may be by an unusual power of reflection and cosmic irony, remain in the memory as strong, often heedlessly daring men of action' and that his fiction is valuable as literature despite belonging to 'the genre of adventure-imperialism' (155). Although *Lord Jim* finds Marlow in a significantly less reflective and regretful mood than *Heart of Darkness*, he briefly acknowledges both the desire and the danger of the lifestyle he shares with Jim in a passage on the *logic of adventure*:

> The story of the last events you shall find in the few pages enclosed here. You must admit that it is romantic beyond the wildest dreams of his [Jim's] boyhood, and yet there is to my mind a sort of profound and terrifying logic in it, as if it were our imagination alone that could set loose upon us the might of an overwhelming destiny. The imprudence of our thoughts recoils upon our heads; who toys with the sword shall perish by the sword. This astounding adventure, of which the most astounding part is that it is true, comes on as an unavoidable consequence. Something of the sort had to happen. You repeat this to yourself while you marvel that such a thing could happen in the year of grace before last. But it has happened – and there is no disputing its logic. (261-262)

Marlow marvels that Jim could lead such an adventurous life so late in the nineteenth century and the British Empire is – in the logic of adventure – a necessary evil for facilitating such a life. Like Willard and McLean, Marlow is addicted to a life of adventure. A comprehensive understanding of Marlow's attitude to colonialism cannot be achieved without recognising this addiction. Marlow may appear more (*Heart of Darkness*) or less (*Lord Jim*) conflicted about the extrapolation of the logic of adventure, but it is a logic whose inevitability he welcomes.

Edge Hill University, UK

Notes

[1] In this essay, I have assumed that the order of publication by Conrad reflects the chronology of Marlow's life. Of the four narratives, "Youth" is clearly first and *Chance* last. Marlow's voice in *Lord Jim* is more mature than in *Heart of Darkness* and the metafictional conceit of him telling these tales to Conrad provides further evidence for the significance of the publication dates.

[2] The Highlanders are referred to as 'Montagnard' in the film, the name given to them by the colonial authorities in French Indochina.

[3] The novel's title recalls another of Conrad's novellas, *The Shadow-Line* (1917).

[4] John Ebert (137-141) reaches a similar conclusion, based on different evidence from the film (and using *Redux* as his source).

[5] In this passage, narrated by McLean, Brabazon demonstrates an idiosyncratic understanding of the distinction between a sociopath and a psychopath. My point is not reliant on the accuracy of this distinction, but on the degree of self-awareness the passage evinces.

[6] Interestingly, Fredric Jameson (29) has recently suggested that Coppola 'borrowed' the conclusion of "Youth" for *Apocalypse Now*.

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Redemptive Mourning: Virginia Woolf's Transformation of the Elegiac Form

ANDREW J. BALL

I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it.

—Emmanuel Levinas

In 1925, after beginning work on *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf writes in her diary: "I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant 'novel.' A new — by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?" (*Diary* 34). Much critical attention has been paid to this turn to the elegiac in Woolf's work but the elegiac tradition had already haunted two of her previous novels, *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. Critics have since quarreled over the particular qualities of Woolf's narratives that would allow us to either align her works within a traditional elegiac paradigm or to categorize her novels as anti- elegies that are intended to wholly subvert, satirize, or deconstruct elegiac convention. Those who find an oppositional discourse at work in Woolf's adoption of this form have described her novels by turns as "anti-elegy" (Spargo), "fiction-elegy" (Smythe), reconstructive feminist elegy (Schenck, Susan Bennett Smith), "satiric elegy" (Zwerdling), "cultural elegy" (Stevenson and Goldman), and modernist "self-elegy" (Ramazani). While it is clear that Woolf's experimental narratives serve to "supplant" the conventional form of the novel, and though her fiction elicits a critical reappraisal of the elegiac tradition, it would be misleading to regard these works as anti-elegiac. Rather, Woolf reinvigorates and reforms the elegiac tradition by employing it in working-through the ethico-existential problem of modern mourning. That is, in the attempt to find a stance of grief that is all one's own, a position in which one comports oneself towards death authentically. For Woolf, this mode of comportment would entail a perpetual resistance to the consolatory function of conventional elegies.

Woolf's elegiac works, in particular *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*, serve as counter-elegies or perhaps novel-elegies in that they resist and reconstruct received conventions in order to produce a new elegiac form that is more responsible and ethically cognizant of the radical alterity of the other who is mourned. Unlike elegies from Milton to Shelley that thematize death in a way that makes the deaths of Lycidas and Adonais/Keats, for example, practically interchangeable, placing them within a formulaic work of mourning that dependably proceeds from despair to consolation, idealizing the transcendent mourned, Woolf's novel-elegies are consistently non-consolatory. Here, the resolution of grief is always deferred. Though Freud would claim that mourning in this way is pathologically melancholic, by honoring the radical asymmetry of the mourner and the mourned, the self and the other, Woolf develops novel-elegies that undermine what Clifton Spargo has termed the "fantasy of reciprocity" found in traditional elegies, and in doing so, creates a more ethical, more responsible literary work of mourning.

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Many critical readers of Woolf have recognized her opposition to consolatory resolution and insofar as this outcome is a fundamental component of the traditional elegy, they attribute her resistance to a wholesale renovation of the form. Moreover, they see this as an indication of Woolf's refusal to mourn, as her inability and unwillingness to grieve. For example, Mark Spilka claims that her "lifelong inability to love...seems to have been peculiarly intertwined with her lifelong inability to grieve" (7). Similarly, Tammy Clewell contends that Woolf's elegiac style is a function of her feminism, aimed at opposing the "consolatory paradigms that neutralize grief in antiquated salves and perpetuate [patriarchal] gender values" (199). She goes on to claim that by "waging a gendered form of rebellion against the aim of closure, Woolf's texts define a deliberate refusal to mourn as the only adequate response to death and wartime destruction" (199). Like many critics, Clewell often conflates the refusal of consolation with the refusal to mourn. Though Clewell fails to make this distinction, she accurately recognizes in Woolf's elegies that "only by refusing consolation and *sustaining grief* can we accept responsibility for the difficult task of performing private and public memory" (219, emphasis added). Clewell and Spilka, among others, misinterpret Woolf's anti- consolatory stance as a refusal to mourn or as a form of deficient, even pathological, mourning. Despite this erroneous conflation, Clewell rightly sees that "Woolf redefines mourning as an ongoing experience, an endless process where the living separate from the dead without completely severing attachments" (2). For critics like Celeste Schenck, it is this tenacious attachment to the mourned other that makes Woolf's novel-elegiac form a revisionary, feminist work of mourning. Ultimately, though, these readers have failed to recognize that Woolf's choice to allow her wounds to remain open, to take part in a working-through that is never complete, and to refuse to forget the mourned other, constitute the ethical nature of her elegies and her commitment to our responsibility for the other's death. Her rebellion against consolation is not a refusal to mourn, but rather a radically persistent grieving that recognizes a responsibility for the other that is not redeemed upon death. Instead, it is in this abiding openness to the past, this interminable and vigilant memory that allows for the possibility of redemption.

For those working from a psychoanalytic model of mourning, Freud and Derrida for example, the refusal or inability to be consoled is the mark of failed mourning. While Freud opposes this pathological, melancholic work of mourning to 'normal' bereavement, Derrida contends that it is the imminent failure of mourning that reveals the alterity of the other and the radical asymmetry that constitutes the ethical relation of the self and the other. For Derrida, failed mourning discloses "an essential anachrony in our being exposed to the other," indicating "the other's singularity and our own mortality" (Clewell 207). Derrida claims that "the acknowledgment of another's death entails an acknowledgment of our own death" and it is this "acknowledgment [that] names the condition for our ethical orientation in the world" (Clewell 207). Characteristically forwarding a deconstructionist fusion of Freud, Heidegger, and Levinas, Derrida argues that mourning "would have to fail in order to succeed" (173). According to Derrida, this failure prevents the reduction of "the lost other to an object for the mourner" (Clewell 207). The failure of mourning is characterized by an endless grieving which forgoes recovery and consolation. It is this interminability that makes grieving ethical in that it respects the "absolute excess" and radical alterity of the other that cannot be objectified in the process of closure and consolation. For Derrida, the failure of mourning is its success insofar as it maintains an ethical relation to the other as well as contributing to

our authentic comportment towards our own death. For Heidegger, we should recall, it is the manner in which we comport ourselves towards our imminent death that constitutes our way of living and our relation both to ourselves and to others. It is only when we become aware that the other's death cannot be thematized, experienced, or represented, that the other's death is that which is wholly their own, that we recognize the radical asymmetry that prevents the other's death from being fully worked-through. In Woolf's case, the aspects of her literary work of mourning that seem to indicate her failure to grieve are in fact the traits that signify the success of her grief and reveal her counter-elegies' ethical acknowledgment of alterity. It is her understanding of loss, trauma, and the wounds left by violence that conditions Woolf's social and political critique, for it is our relation to our mortality that grounds our "ethical orientation in the world."

Gillian Beer has written that "death was [Woolf's] special knowledge" (35). Indeed, her elegies, pouring forth from a wellspring of grief and trauma, seem to proclaim just such a tortured knowledge. But perhaps knowledge is not the most accurate word. This connotes that the other's death is something graspable, something that can be categorized and objectified by thetic understanding. But the untimely deaths of her mother, her sister Stella, and her brother Thoby, each exceed Woolf's capacity—or her desire—to comprehend. Woolf recognizes the profound incongruence, the gaping abyss that stands between even the most intimate of relations, and sees in this aporia an untraversable distance that will prevent her from ever knowing others, even her own family. Woolf conceptualizes this aspect of intersubjectivity long before the philosophers of such epistemic doubt. The ontological asymmetry that is constitutive of intersubjectivity and the correlative unknowability of the other will continue to haunt Woolf and will serve as a foundation for her new form of elegy and the ethics of mourning that she formulates in these works.

Woolf's first attempt to theorize the asymmetry that divides the self and the mourned other became *Jacob's Room*, an elegy for her brother Thoby who died of typhoid in 1906. The radical alterity of the other and the epistemic limitations that this entails situates the style of her first elegiac experiment. Beer writes that Woolf's elegies "compose themselves about an absence" and indeed *Jacob's Room* is rife with images and scenarios that serve to emphasize Jacob's absence, both literal and figurative. The first and last scenes of the novel provide a frame for the absence that the entire novel laments. In the scene on the beach, Jacob is already lost, inaccessible to us, as he will be throughout the novel, until his absence is most tragically felt when his mother and Bonamy enter his vacant room. When Woolf writes in the manuscript, "let us suppose that the Room will hold [the novel] together," it is not the room itself that serves as the nexus and structural frame of the novel but the absence of Jacob that its emptiness signifies (qtd in Roe xxxviii). Clewell insightfully notes that, "in elegizing Jacob as an irrecoverable absence from the start, Woolf refuses to allow even the narrative of his life to compensate for his loss" (200). By making Jacob figuratively absent from the elegy that mourns him, Woolf refuses to aestheticize or aggrandize his life. By resisting any attempt to represent an interior world that was inaccessible to her, Woolf's elegiac work of mourning remains ethically distant in recognition of the unknowable otherness of the other.

In Jacob, Woolf gives us a character that is continually approached but never inhabited, a character that remains opaque in every way. Not only are we exiled from Jacob's subjectivity, but we are only left with a sketch of his appearance. The episodic narrative of the novel, its unsettling movement, and the ambiguous omniscience of the narration allow us to only marginally come to know Jacob, and while we never encounter his innermost self, we are no more banished to the epistemic periphery than those closest to him.

Woolf traverses this space of the unknowable other both in the form and the content of *Jacob's Room*. The narrator of the novel speaks in an indirect, ambiguous register that problematically relates the thoughts of different characters. At one point, speculatively speaking for Jacob she states, "nobody sees any one as he is...they see a whole—they see all sorts of things—they see themselves" (JR 23). Not only does Woolf expound the impossibility of truly perceiving the other, of understanding a person "as he is," at the same time, she takes a critical stance in regard to her own elegiac enterprise, admitting that all elegy is self-elegy, all mourning, the mourning of one's own death. Here, she claims that no one elegizes anyone else; they only elegize themselves.

When the narrator goes on to conclude that "it is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done," it is as if Woolf is describing the way one must read this novel. As in our relations with every other, the insurmountable alterity that separates us demands that our limited understanding of each other be garnered through hints and the ineffable saying that underlies what is said (JR 24). Alex Zwerdling argues that Woolf "wanted to give the sense of someone who remains a permanently unknown quantity," but he does not go far enough with this formulation (900-901). In fact, Woolf resists treating the mourned other as a quantifiable thing. For Woolf, the other is neither a "sum" nor a "whole," but exceeds quantification or a simply cumulative piecing together.

Unlike the traditional elegy that enumerates the laudable characteristics of the mourned, idealizing the innermost qualities of the other's character, Woolf, elegizing her own brother, refrains from such sentimentality. Instead, as a consequence of the asymmetry that founds our sociality, we can only encounter or come to know "the massive fronts" that "conceal [the] secret code" of Jacob/Thoby, and every other (JR 57). While Woolf resists sentimentality and aggrandizing Jacob's death, this aspect of her counter-elegy performs a more ethical work of mourning than what is found in the idealizing poetics of conventional elegy.

But, Woolf does not merely remain mindful of alterity. While her narrator does directly exposit on the epistemic limitations of the ethical relation, the narrative of *Jacob's Room* itself performs and demonstrates the impossibility of entering into the ownmost sphere of the other's subjectivity. Woolf not only mourns her brother, but also the reality of this untraversable abyss that will perpetually prevent her, and all of us, from ever being truly intimate with anyone. She laments, "never was there a harsher necessity! or one which entails greater pain, more certain disaster; for wherever I seat myself, I die in exile" (JR 57). No matter the stance of her narrator, no matter the degree of our supposed intimacy with the other—as Mr. Ramsey will later remind us—"we die each alone." Preserving this separation is necessary for Woolf's creation of an elegy that remains sincere and responsible for the unwanted truth that an imperceptible gulf limits our potential relations. For, "such is the manner of our seeing. Such the conditions of our love" (JR 70-71).

Because of the grief that results from this "certain disaster"—the impossibility of a reciprocal relation with the other—traditional elegy resorts to idealizing the mourned other in order to recuperate a reciprocity that never really existed. Conversely, Woolf's counter-elegy "question[s] the very premise of reciprocity by reminding us of its impossibility" (Spargo 131). Clifton Spargo contends that the impossibility of reciprocity discovered by the elegiac process "reinscribes the crisis of loss as a matter for ethics" (131). The failure of real intimacy that can result from our inability to truly know one another causes us to develop a "wishful fantasy of reciprocity" in our commemoration

of the lost other that serves a compensatory function. The retrospective fantasy of reciprocity that is formed in response to the burden of failed intimacy is evinced by the trope of idealizing consolation found in traditional elegy. Counter-elegies, such as those written by Woolf, "make us aware that the transcendent premise informing any resolution of grief is really an idealized version of reciprocity" (Spargo 148). With her elegies Woolf interrogates and critiques the commemorative task of the precedent tradition that sought, through the retrospective idealization of the mourned, to restore an illusory reciprocity that would compensate for the failed mutuality that is a consequence of alterity. This "compensatory projection" suppresses human alterity and serves as a "fiction of idealized intimacy" that, in perfecting the other, reduces her to an idyllic symbol that signifies not the lost other, but present regret and the desire for a reciprocal relation that remains impossible. Instead of developing a narrative of intimate relations that would positively commemorate Thoby's life, fictitiously idealizing her lost brother and the connections that were severed by his death, Woolf composes a novel of radical autonomy and separation that, rather than doing an injustice to his memory, is a more ethical remembrance of his life that bears witness to the alterity that she remains responsible for after his death.

It must be noted as well that *Jacob's Room* is not only an elegy for Thoby Stephen, but for all of those who suffered the atrocities of the first World War. The war haunts the reader in advance, looming and anticipated. When Julia Eliot walks along Piccadilly, she experiences an ecstatic moment of prescient memory of the violence to come, in which "the tumult of the present seems like an elegy for past youth and past summers, and there rose in her mind a curious sadness, as if time and eternity showed through skirts and waistcoats, and she saw people passing tragically to destruction" (JR 168). Unlike the romantic, sentimentalized Victorian elegies for the fallen, Woolf writes an elegy for a life that is, in many ways, unexceptional, even relating banal, pedestrian aspects of its hero's life. In doing this she does not merely shy away from the hero worship, glorification, and idealization found in traditional war elegies, rather, with this text, Woolf aims a complex social and political critique at those who would exalt the violence of war. Alex Zwerdling sees *Jacob's Room* as a revisionist elegy that undermines the unethical idealization of the victims of war and the violence that it implicitly validates, even reveres, as the antecedent condition for the formation of heroic figures. He writes: "[Woolf] had an instinctive distrust for reverence of any kind, feeling that it was a fundamentally dishonest mental habit that turned flesh-and-blood human beings into symbolic creatures [and] indirectly glorified war" (903). Instead of turning Jacob into a figure of noble sacrifice, Woolf depicts a death that is "perfectly pointless" (Zwerdling 903). Woolf rejects the "grand frescoes of the heroic imagination" in favor of "the small canvas appropriate to" Jacob's unremarkable life (Zwerdling 911).

By resisting what Celeste M. Schenck claims is the "most important convention of elegy," the "deification of the dead one in a process that lifts him out of nature," Woolf does not allow Jacob—and by association, all those who fell in the war—to become a figure of noble sacrifice (15). The ascension "out of nature" that would conventionally allow for consolation is foreclosed by Woolf. We find no closure or resolution in Jacob's death, only a meaningless loss that Woolf will continue to mourn even when composing *The Waves* years later. For Schenck, the refusal of consolation is a markedly feminist subversion of the masculine elegiac. Moreover, by "refusing to mourn and separate" Woolf's feminist counter-elegiac inverts the "masculine model of redemption" (Schenck 18). This refusal to separate provides a "kind of tentative resolution through attachment

rather than rupture" (Schenck 18). The critical consensus seems to be that Woolf openly refuses to locate any redemptive potential even in her own counter-elegiac work of mourning, but these readers fail to recognize that Woolf does indeed find the possibility of redemption not in the logic of elegiac consolation but in the openness to the past that refuses to relinquish attachments to the mourned. For Woolf, the inauthentic closure of consolatory forgetting is the very negation of the redemptive capacity of vigilant mourning. It is in remaining open to the past and the wounds and traumas that are inscribed there, in continuing to mourn without the hope or desire for a consolatory closure that would entail an irresponsible forgetting that annihilates the alterity of the other, it is by abiding in mourning that we find the possibility of redemption. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote, "the past, therefore, is not past;" in taking her stance of non-consolatory abiding, Woolf remains attached to the mourned other, taking responsibility for their memory, giving testimony on their lives and attesting to the loss that has created a wound that must not be inauthentically healed by unethical, self-serving consolation. Rather than transforming Jacob into an ascendant, idealized hero who, like so many others, nobly sacrificed himself for our freedom, Woolf provides a more sincere, ethical remembrance of the senseless death that was visited upon so many youths of their generation. Jacob *does* become a sacrifice, but his is an unjust death, not a deific symbol of redemption through war. Woolf's counter-elegiac provides a critique of the cult of the hero and the culture that permits such violence to be commemorated in the reverent tradition of the masculine elegy.

But, if the ethical relation of the self and the other demands the recognition of radical asymmetry and (pre-)ontological separation, then how is Woolf's feminist renovation of the elegy more ethical in its commitment to remaining attached to the mourned other? Insofar as Woolf's "endless mourning compels us to refuse consolation, sustain grief, and accept responsibility for the difficult task of remembering the catastrophic losses of the twentieth century," she attempts to forge a connection of vigilant remembrance that not only bears witness to the other, but also to the otherness of the other, the radical alterity that prevents a reciprocity that we so desire as to resort to unethical, compensatory representations of the mourned that eclipse their fundamental autonomy (Clewell 199). The task of ethics is to navigate the paradox of a/symmetry that characterizes our relationships. We are equal, and yet unequal in that we are hostages to the limitations of our own subjectivity.

Much of the phenomenological tradition, which is in its nascent stages when Woolf is writing, is built upon discerning how we are to responsibly found a relation with the other when our onto-existential lot is to be always already inaccessible to one another. Paul Ricoeur and Emmanuel Levinas, contemporary thinkers within this tradition, have taken slightly divergent stances concerning this paradox, the brief examination of which will help us to better understand how Woolf's opposition to the elegiac tradition's "fantasy of reciprocity" is an attempt to forge a new critical ethics of mourning that does not violate the intersubjective separation that makes human community a monadological "plurality of constitutive centers" rather than an "undifferentiated collective" (Zahavi 121). Woolf's early initiation of this ethical discourse is yet another proof of her status as a vanguard artist and thinker. In response to Levinas's claims concerning the necessary, pre-ontological separation that divides the self and the other, constituting alterity, Ricoeur argues that "ethics becomes impossible when the condition of selfhood deteriorates to a point where ethical action appears inhibited or prevented by a deficiency of reciprocity"

(Spargo 171). However, as with Woolf, for Levinas "ethics as reciprocity leads toward a defined set of answerable responsibilities that anticipate fulfillment, thus establishing a relation of equivalence between the responsive self and that to which it responds and, ironically, bringing to an end the very source of its provocation in the relation of inequality" (Spargo 171). Similarly, according to Ricoeur "the problem of ethics is how to admit this inequality through which the other has been designated without proposing it as irremediable" (Spargo 171). "The task of ethical solicitude," therefore, is a "'search for equality in the midst of inequality,' with ethics demanding to be returned always to the idiom of the possible" (Spargo 172). Woolf's counter-elegies are intended to contribute to the interminably deferred fulfillment of her responsibility to those that she has lost, "establishing a relation of equivalence" where the possibility of redemption in her openness to the past can "brin[g] to an end...the relation of inequality" (Spargo 171). Woolf's ethics of mourning provides a model of successful grieving that is able to overcome the asymmetry that prevents our unification in life by enabling us—in bearing witness to the mourned other—to be symmetrically attached in a relationship of responsible reciprocity.

Christine Froula writes that, with *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf is able to create a post- theological "communal elegy" for both the survivors and the victims of WWI, moving "beyond the 'satiric elegy' of *Jacob's Room* to explore the genre's full profundity, complexity, and power" (87). In this, her next elegiac work, Woolf moves from a personal, individual work of mourning, to the public sphere of communal mourning where her critical lens is trained on the culture that enabled the wound of the war to be inflicted and now endeavors to expel any remembrance that would reflect its role in the catastrophe. As with *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway* elegizes the victims of sacrificial violence, but on a scale that implicates the failure of English culture to take responsibility for the violence of WWI.

Froula offers a Girardian reading of the elegy, one that accurately identifies Septimus as a prophetic witness who is made into a scapegoat, a pariah, by a community that must expel the memory of the war by essentially murdering a survivor who is being driven mad by his interiorized testimony. From Septimus's tortured memory of the "collective murder that his civilization has commissioned from him" comes the "astonishing revelation" that he seeks to impart to a "society strategically blind to its own violence;" but when his testimony falls on deaf ears, labeled as madness, as shell shock, and Septimus finds that his revelation can only be given "through his sacrificial death," he "foreknows that he must sacrifice his elegiac progress" in order to "perform the revelation that no one heeds" (Froula 113, 117). Septimus "the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer," would reveal the hypocrisy and truth of the war through his attestation, his "premonition of 'the birth of a new religion,'" thus encouraging English society to atone for the collective violence that it has enabled and be redeemed (115). But, as the scapegoat, Septimus must bear the burden of witness and be sacrificed as the redemptive surrogate for those who desire to forget. Froula writes: "Septimus's doctors act as agents for a society that scapegoats him for bringing home the murderous aggression it would disavow, that projects its aggression upon him and expels him, its symbolic embodiment, so that he seems to bear it away. But the scapegoat who does not suffer silently turns victimage into prophecy" (Froula 115). Like Septimus the prophetic witness, Woolf as counter-elegist refuses to forget, to remain silent, and thus "turns victimage into prophesy" by bearing witness to atrocities that would be reenacted on an even greater scale in the near future. Her call too is left unheeded. In this way, the elegist is figured as she who will not "bear it away" in forgetful silence, who will not be consoled, but rather finds redemption in the vigilant memory that openly bears the burden of interminable testimony.

While Froula correctly reads Clarissa as a feminine figure of the elegiac survivor-witness—a status transferred to her after the death of Septimus—she erroneously argues that Clarissa's "elegiac progress" is teleologically bound for "existential consolation," claiming that Clarissa finds secular redemption in consolation, which Froula describes as an "elegiac conversion" that "acknowledges loss, and affirms the consolations that reward the elegist's bowing to reality" (Smythe 72; Froula 125, 118). What Froula fails to recognize is that the modern elegist only finds redemption in the *refusal* of consolation. As Jahan Ramazani reminds us in his groundbreaking work *Poetry of Mourning*—in opposition to the model of healthy and successful mourning found in Peter Sacks's equally important work *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*— the "melancholic mourning [of] the modern elegist tends not to achieve but to resist consolation, not to override but to sustain anger, not to heal but to reopen the wounds of loss" (Ramazani xi). For the modernist counter-elegy represents "not so much a suture as an open wound" that conveys "not [the] transcendence or redemption of loss but immersion in it" (Ramazani 4). A more accurate interpretation of the modernist counter-elegiacs of Virginia Woolf would stand as a middle term between the remarks of Froula and Ramazani. We must recognize that it is not consolation that is transcendent but the mourned other, and that it is not loss that is redeemed but the mourner who finds the possibility of redemption in her openness to a past that is never fully absent. As Levinas writes, "the absence of the Other is exactly his presence as Other" (Levinas 89). Even in life the other is radically transcendent, beyond my reach and capacity for understanding and thus irredeemably absent.

It is this absolute exteriority that individuates us, making us subjects infinitely responsible for ourselves and, as Levinas would have it, for the other as well. The redemption of the counter-elegist is not made possible by consolation, but in its refusal and the open opposition to the inauthentic and unethical solace of silence that would attempt to forget the other and unjustly annihilate her transcendence. By remaining open to a past that is never fully past, never wholly absent, the counter-elegist's vigilant remembrance continues to responsibly bear witness to the other, to refuse the unethical closure of consolation, and in the case of Clarissa, to take up the responsibility of testifying to the unjust death of a practically anonymous other, a stranger, so that the other may survive in memory. As with Lady Bexborough in "Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street," Septimus/Clarissa/Woolf takes on the responsibility for bearing witness "for the sake of others...for one does not live for oneself" alone (*Party* 22).

The question of survival, of what will endure beyond one's death, and how one will be remembered after death haunt the pages of Woolf's next elegiac experiment, *To the Lighthouse*. Woolf writes in her diary upon the completion of the novel that she can finally lay the memory of her dead parents to rest now that she has elegized them. Does this mean that by writing the novel she has found consolation for their deaths? In her diary Woolf writes: "I used to think of him & mother daily; but writing The Lighthouse laid them in my mind;" and later in "A Sketch of the Past": "when [*To the Lighthouse*] was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her" (208; *Moments* 80). But in a letter written to her sister in May 1927, Vanessa Bell thanks Woolf "for having raised [her parents] from the dead in its pages" (Goldman 14). So, one asks, does this elegy exorcize the ghosts of her parents, laying their memory to rest so that the elegist no longer hears their voices, or does the elegy serve to forever exhume these specters, giving them an enduring voice that resists silencing? I would argue that the latter is the case, with certain qualifications.

To the Lighthouse satirizes the human desire to have the memory of one's life endure in the face of the vast and sublime expanses of time. But even as it wittily mocks such an endeavor, the novel, as an elegy, is a work that to some degree is one of remembrance and an attempt to enable the memory of the lost other to survive, maintaining the elegist's attachment to the mourned. Gillian Beer writes that *To the Lighthouse* is an exemplary example of "writing as survival," but whose survival, the mourned other, or the mourner who remains? It seems that Woolf's counter-elegies accomplish both tasks. The writer-survivor is able to work-through her mourning, composing a text that is infinitely repeatable thereby resisting the foreclosure of mourning, while the lost others are commemorated in such a way—in the idiom of the counter-elegy—that preserves radical exteriority and their transcendent individuality.

Beer writes that "in elegy there is a repetition of mourning and an allaying of mourning. Elegy lets go of the past, formally transferring it into language, laying ghosts by confining them to a text and giving them its freedom" (35). She sees in this novel an attempt by Woolf to "honor her obligations to family history and yet freely to dispose that history," letting go of their memory and expelling it in the cathartic and consoling task of writing them out of her life (Beer 34). The fallaciousness of this reading is evinced by the fact that the novel not only elegizes her dead parents but her sister Stella, in the figure of Prue, and most importantly that of Thoby, in the figure of Andrew. If Woolf's elegiac task were to "dispose" of the suffering over the death of Thoby, then the composition of *Jacob's Room* would have sufficed and Woolf would have no need to continue to mourn him in *To the Lighthouse* or to continue to elegize him in *The Waves*. Woolf's counter-elegiac work clearly has a therapeutic capacity to enable her process of working-though, but this is not a procedure of forgetting or of exorcizing the mourned other. It is not a letting go but is rather a process of radical remembering and writing survival in the dualistic sense that we have described. By continuing to write elegy after elegy Woolf persistently defers consolation, remaining open to the wounds of the past, and in the process sets up a counter-discourse to the Victorian elegy that seeks to rewrite the conventions in order to accommodate a more responsible, ethical, feminist configuration that founds a work of mourning on vigilant memory rather than self-serving oblivion.

Much like *Jacob's Room* the narrative technique found in *To the Lighthouse* is able to represent and preserve radical exteriority. Unlike the former, the narrator of the latter inhabits the psyches of the characters to highlight their inability to access the interiority of the other characters, foregrounding the transcendent separation that cleaves our relations. This aspect of Woolf's elegies not only serves to respect alterity but also to represent the way in which we experience it, how it affects and constitutes our relationships, and its role in identity formation.

With the "Time-Passes" section of the novel Woolf critically satirizes the conventions of the pastoral elegy, namely the pathetic fallacy that was so disdained by Ruskin. The pathetic fallacy, the technique of personifying the natural world in such a way as to have it mourn the death of the other, is rejected in Woolf's elegy. Here, as Mrs. Ramsey, Andrew, and Prue are dying unremarkable deaths, the natural world does not mourn at all. Instead, it descends upon their home, overcoming and subsuming it in the unforgiving and absolutely indifferent fecundity of a nature unconcerned with their mortality. The personification of nature is yet another function of the elegiac tradition's reversion to "hyperbolic reciprocity" and the idealization of the other. As Spargo put it, the pathetic fallacy "functions both as a screen for the mourner's projective, compensatory imagination and as the terrain of the impossible, indeed mythic agency standing in for or in advance

of remembrance itself" (Spargo 159-160). Through her "collapse or inversion of the values of the pastoral" Woolf criticizes the unethical impulse to transfer remembrance and mourning onto a mythical surrogate, at the same time embracing mortality as so natural as to be almost trivial on the universal scale of nature (Stevenson and Goldman 181-182). In this way, Woolf is able to precariously balance her anti-pastoral ethics of mourning which advocates the necessity of the interminable grief and remembrance of survivors with Mr. Ramsey's misgivings about the unforgiving cosmic juggernaut that is sure to roll over the trace of his existence.

We have said that the commemorative idealization of the mourned other that is componential of the elegiac tradition that Woolf revolts against is an unethical mode of mourning insofar as it requires the denial of alterity. In addition, we have claimed that Woolf critically engages and parodies the cult of the hero, decrying its similar obviation of humanity, often implicitly serving as an apologetic for martial violence. But, if this is the case, then what are we to make of the seemingly mythical, imperial figure of Percival in her last and perhaps most lyrical elegy, *The Waves*?

Jane Marcus reads Woolf's parodic depiction of "Percival and Barnard as Hero and Poet" as a "fictional prophecy" of fascism, the oppositional function of which is "consistent with the socialist politics and antifascist ethics of *The Years* and *Three Guineas*" (Goldman 150, 155). Woolf exposes the unethical consequences of the cult of the hero and the role that traditional elegiacs have played "in the making of culture" in such a way as to provide "the grounding for nationalism, war, and eventually fascism" (Goldman 155). In exploring the function of the elegy, Woolf "revealed the ethical problems to be faced in using this patriarchal genre" but was able to overcome those problems by replacing the patriarchal conventions of the elegy—such as the idealization of the soldier-hero and the imminent consolation that resolves mourning—with the perpetual openness and tenacity of an ethically viable work of mourning (Goldman 155). With *The Waves* Woolf continues to develop her counter-elegies' function as a critical, feminist, oppositional discourse that "deconstructs the politics of the [traditional] elegy as an instrument of social control" which forwards an implicitly coercive and hegemonic message of the justification of violence in the garb of heroism.

Woolf does not engage in the convention of elegiac idealization with the character of Percival, but rather satirizes its function in the nineteenth-century tradition. In her depiction of Percival, or rather in the absence of such direct access, Woolf returns to the method of *Jacob's Room* where, like a traumatic event, the mourned other is under erasure, becoming a vacuous absence that cannot be represented. But this absence is not merely the negation of the presence of the other; it is such that the other exceeds the capacity of our understanding, transcending our ability to grasp and conceptualize.

With *The Waves* Woolf turns yet again to the death of her brother Thoby, elegizing him for the fourth time. Woolf writes in her diary upon completing the novel: "Anyhow it is done; & I have been sitting these 15 minutes in a state of glory, & calm, & some tears, thinking of Thoby & if I could write Julian Thoby Stephen 1881-1906 on the first page" (*Diary IV* 10). Though Woolf chose to not to indicate Thoby as the elegized, her sister was immediately able to recognize Thoby as the person that the work mourns. Vanessa Bell writes to Woolf that she wonders whether she has found "the lullaby capable of singing him to rest" (*Letters* 367). But singing him to rest was never Woolf's intention. Woolf's ethical work of mourning sets out to perform a counter-elegiac process that continues to defer the closure of grief, for this is the only way to take responsibility for the other and to bear vigilant witness to their memory.

And yet, one may ask, how are we to reconcile the forgetting that is arguably necessary for one to survive trauma with the, perhaps obsessive, remembrance of the counter-elegy? For Woolf, it is not the repressing procedure of consolation "that reward[s] the elegist's bowing to reality," rather it is only through remembering incessantly that one can truly work-through the trauma, only by facing the wound in its devastating actuality can we hope to be redeemed in our authentic openness to the truth of our past, free of idealization, heroism, and the aggrandizing veneer of a fetishized past that never was.

Harvard University, USA

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From Sight to Touch: Female Identity in Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney*

HAWK CHANG

Abstract

Female characters are often foils in Brian Friel's plays. However, Friel's *Molly Sweeney* (1994) focuses on women's central problem—the question of female identity. Although much has been examined regarding national identity, history, religion, emigration, and translation in Friel's works, issues relevant to women and female identity are less addressed. This paper discusses female identity and difference in Friel's *Molly Sweeney* via French feminist theories, exploring the extent to which women can move towards a position outside and beyond the male logocentric logic of A and B, a position of otherness or difference.

Keywords: Irish women, identity, difference, Brian Friel, *Molly Sweeney*

I. Prelude

Although Irish women have been characterized in terms of allegorical mother figures for some time (Innes 1993, pp. 40-41; Nash 1993, p. 47), the image of women and their actual lives began to undergo significant changes in the last few decades of the twentieth century. Eavan Boland's poem "The Women" showcases the way contemporary Irish women better grasp their own identity by removing "woman" from a clear-cut hierarchical dichotomy of man and woman and placing her in the nebulous state of "the in-between" (2005, p. 141). Nonetheless, there are still women who fail to recognize their innate power of feminine identity as difference lapses into an unfathomable darkness, as presented in Friel's Molly in *Molly Sweeney*. Friel gained wide recognition with his earlier play *Philadelphia, Here I Come* (1964) and has since written "the most substantial and impressive body of work in contemporary Irish drama" (Maxwell 1984, p. 201). He is best-known as the playwright of *Philadelphia, Here I Come*, *Translations* (1981), *Making History* (1988), and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) (Jeffares 2014, pp. 147-49). As many critics contend, Friel is one of the few living Irish playwrights whose reputation has been critically acclaimed in world literature (Greene 2010, p. 89; Mahony 1998, p. 125; Roche 1995, p. 72). Born in Omagh, County Tyrone in Northern Ireland, Friel and his plays are inevitably linked to the destruction and construction of Irish national identity. According to Seamus Deane, Friel's northern community features its deep sense of failure, often expressed in violence, emigration, and loveless-ness (1994, p. 246). Influenced by the Northern crisis, his plays appear to "coordinate with the poetry of Heaney and Montague in the elaboration of a long analysis of the politics of language, the language of politics and their relationship to the language of poetry and drama" (994, p. 246). Typical of Friel's works are people's meditation on and elaboration of identity, issues of truth and fiction, and the fallibility of

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legitimized means of communication. In his play *Making History*, Friel explicates his contention that history is arbitrarily fabricated by a one-dimensional master narrator, a concept which is similar to that espoused by New Historicists. To help Irish people construct identities for themselves, Friel co-founded the Field Day Theater with Stephen Rea in 1980, aiming to promote the search for "a middle ground between the country's entrenched positions" (Andrew 1995, p. 6). Additionally, *Translations* exposes the violence of naming and the difficulty of cross-cultural understanding. Generally, Friel is committed to uncovering the hegemony of monolithic power and maintaining a certain degree of equilibrium in human life and society.

Molly Sweeney depicts Friel's habitual reflection on the inequality of two main forces—this time not so much the imbalance between nation and nation as between men and women. According to critic George O'Brien, while youthful male protagonists recur in Friel's plays, female characters are comparatively less addressed. However, like his precursors such as John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey, Friel often casts "imaginative sympathy" on his female characters (1990, pp. 122-23). In *Molly Sweeney*, the titular female protagonist suffering from her loss of eyesight in early childhood, is convinced by her husband Frank to have an operation conducted by the passé ophthalmologist Dr. Rice. Torn between the inducement of Frank and the selfish Dr. Rice, Molly is plunged into the border between darkness and light. In the existing literature, some critics compare this play with Friel's previous works, such as *Faith Healer* (1979) and *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993), and dismiss its artistic value (Mahony 1998, p. 130; Murray 1997, p. 228). Among the discussions on *Molly Sweeney*, very little has been conducted from the perspective of feminism, French feminism in particular. Helen Lojek looks upon *Molly Sweeney* as another Ballybeg tale of "faith and healing" (2004, p. 185). Fintan O'Toole proposes that Molly Sweeney's situation obviously reflects that of Northern Ireland—one that verges on the extraordinary space of exile and borderlands (1994, p. 10). By the same token, F. C. McGrath asserts that Molly's obscure, disturbed sight embodies "Friel's own existence moving back and forth across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland" (1999, p. 278). Additionally, both Karen M. Moloney and Richard Pine approach the play from the perspective of colonial and postcolonial politics (Moloney 2000, pp. 285-310; Pine 1999, p. 288). In short, *Molly Sweeney* seems to be a text corresponding to the *status quo* of the post-colonial condition. Intriguingly, Friel articulates more than once his aversion to writing only about politics (Delaney 2000, p. 201).

Richard Pine maintains that *Molly Sweeney* can be read as a feminist fable, but he does not investigate the text closely from feminist perspectives (1999, p. 288). When evaluated through the lens of French feminism, Brian Friel's *Molly Sweeney* is embedded with hierarchical binary oppositions such as man and woman, sight and touch, vision and illusion, power and submission, knowledge and innocence, speech and silence, and rationality and madness. Such hierarchal dichotomies which are structured around men and women are censured in contemporary French feminism. By applying selected theories of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva to a reading of *Molly Sweeney*, it is found that Molly's operation is destined to fail because the discrepancy between a male visual world and a female tactile world can hardly be bridged. My argument is that by presenting *Molly Sweeney*, Friel projects and re-affirms an unorthodox feminine discourse of touch, one which can dismantle traditional patriarchal reasoning. It helps us explore the possibility of re-claiming the repressed, inarticulate female speech of modern Irish women.

II. Exclusion from Male Dominance

Hélène Cixous is famous for her antagonism to all forms of unbalanced binary oppositions and hierarchies, as well as for her support of a feminine writing closely associated with the body. In her essay "Sorties," Cixous specifies a range of hierarchical oppositions which have dominated Western thought for a long period of time. Oppositions such as culture and nature, head and heart, form and matter, speech and writing, and man and woman are prevalent throughout Western civilization (1981, pp. 90-91). Cixous argues that whereas the former categories are always privileged, the latter are always marginalized or excluded from the center. Take the opposition of man and women for example. Within a patriarchal society, women become represented as the "Other," an idea Simon de Beauvoir elaborated in *The Second Sex.* As a consequence, women as the inferior other sex are constantly yoked by patriarchy. In fact, evidence of this inequality between men and women permeates *Molly Sweeney*. The life of protagonist Molly is mostly encompassed and stifled by different male characters, including her father, her husband, and Dr. Rice (Camati 2010, p. 129). The positions of the main characters are meaningfully set at the beginning of the play, which betrays Molly's ambiguous status in the presence of men: "I suggest that each character inhabits his/her own special acting area—Dr. Rice stage left, Molly Sweeney center stage, Frank Sweeney stage right" (Friel 1996, p. 455). Manifestly, Molly is not only physically but mentally trapped between Frank and Mr. Rice. On one hand, Frank takes care of Molly not out of love but out of pity and curiosity, because he takes to devoting himself to good causes. However, instead of helping Molly regain vision and happiness, Frank's insistence on Molly's operation brings her to a point of no return. On the other hand, Molly's life is adversely affected by Mr. Rice, the ophthalmologist who cures Molly of the blindness with a view to redressing his own lost reputation: "The moment I decided I was going to operate on Molly," says Dr. Rice, "I had an impulse—a dizzying, exuberant, overmastering, intoxicating instinct to phone Roger Bloomstein in New York" (Friel 1996, p. 469). Ironically, an outmoded doctor, Mr. Rice considers the operation less an act of charity than a "chance of a lifetime, the one-in-a-thousand opportunity that can rescue a career" (Friel 1996, p. 460). In a nutshell, neither Frank nor Dr. Rice cares about Molly. Instead, they make use of Molly as a tool for their own self-accomplishments. In comparison, constantly internalized as a member of the second sex, Molly's "downfall" derives from her strong desire to please the men surrounding her (DeVinney 1999, p. 113).

In addition to Frank and Dr. Rice, Molly's father is another male obstacle that keeps her from developing her self-identity and self-confidence. In one of her recollections, Molly recounted the way her father had played the role of instructor when she was very young

> By the time I was five years of age, my father had taught me the names of dozens of flowers and herbs and shrubs and trees. He was a judge and his work took him all over the country. And every evening, when he got home, after he'd had a few quick drinks, he'd pick me up in his arms and carry me out to the walled garden.
> "Tell me now," he'd ask. "Where precisely are we?"
> "We're in your garden." (Friel 1996, p. 455)

The dominant power of patriarchy is exemplified in the role of the father. As opposed to the judging father who instructs her to recognize different flowers, Molly is innocently confined to her father's "walled garden" without much hope of escape. The innocent,

trustworthy father-daughter relationship eventually gives way to Molly's disillusionment and painful realization. She used to regard her father as an unfaltering supporter in her confrontation with hardships. However, after years of suffering, Molly gets to know the heart of the matter—her father's miserliness: "The truth of the matter was he was always mean with money; he wouldn't pay the blind school fee" (Friel 1996, p. 509). Molly's over-confidence in and over-reliance on her father, her husband, and Mr. Rice, the trinity of male dominance in the play, tragically brings her to an impasse because none of these male characters close to her cares about her wellbeing. Accordingly, from the interactions between Molly and the other male protagonists, a hierarchical opposition between man and woman is consolidated.

Molly's mother is another female victim who is marginalized in the play. In contrast to her father, who takes the dominant role in her life, Molly's mother is scarcely mentioned. The image of Molly's mother is deliberately distorted because she is described as wild and insane, a marginal character either "away in hospital with her nerves" or shouting at her family members for dinner like a madwoman (Friel 1996, p. 457). The reference to her mother's stay in the hospital is allusive of her mental problem. In comparison with her father as a "judge," Molly's mother is worse than an ordinary person. At best, she is depicted as the housemaid who takes charge of the house chores, and, at worst, a lunatic staying for long periods in the hospital. This demonstrates another hierarchical opposition between reason and madness, added to the existing hierarchal imbalance between man and woman. Notably, while Molly is handicapped in vision, her mother is disordered in mentality. In other words, incomplete either physically or psychologically, both female characters in the play are invariably lacking. Both Molly and her mother deviate from the normality stipulated by males in the male-dominated society.

III. A Sighted World That Does Not Apply to Women

In the play, Molly is often forced to embrace the supremacy of sight and vision. However, her forced identification with "sight" does not bring her pleasure but disaster. Molly's father calls her Nemophilia, the scientific name of a genus of flowers commonly known as "Baby Blue Eyes" (Friel 1996, p. 456). In a similar vein, Frank thinks that Molly is supposed to "have to learn to see" (Friel 1996, p. 462). In fact, Molly deteriorates into the object of the male gaze step by step. While her father regards her as a pretty flower to be gazed at, her husband keeps inculcating into her mind the necessity of vision. Molly's monologue by in the following reiterates her role as an object rather than subject:

> The morning the bandages were to be removed, a staff nurse spent half-an-hour preparing me for Mr. Rice. It wasn't really her job, she told me; but this was my big day and I had to look my best and she was happy to do it. So she sponged my face and hands. She made me clean my teeth again. She wondered did I use lipstick—maybe just for today? She did the best she could with my hair, God help her. She looked at my fingernails and suggested that a touch of clever varnish would be nice. (Friel 1996, p. 482)

Key words such as "lipstick," "fingernail," "perfume," and "varnish" often relate to female appearance and are altered to please the male gaze. Aided by another female accomplice, the staff nurse, Molly falls victim to the doctor's gaze with little awareness. Pathetically, as a patient undergoing a sight operation, Molly has no alternative but to submit to the medical knowledge of the male Dr. Rice. On the other hand, she is harnessed by a hostile tradition which promotes the myth of female beauty. To conform to this

male-friendly convention, Molly is always alerted to the importance of her appearance under the scrutiny of males. This episode helps demonstrate how Molly as a woman is subjugated in the male-controlled world of medical surgery and the world of sight. Consequently, as critic Anna McMullan argues, Molly Sweeney "stages the performance of male authority on the female body" (2006, p. 145).

Such an emphasis on the male gaze has been criticized by Irigaray, who argues that traditional philosophical discourse based on patriarchy cannot reflect or represent female experience. According to Irigaray, Freud's theory of sexual difference is based on the visibility of difference. It is I/eye (of males) that distinguishes right from wrong. However, only a male has an obvious sex organ, the penis. As a result, when he looks at women, Freud can see nothing. In the wake of such a bias, female sexual difference is construed as an absence or negation of the male norm. Irigaray censures this "subservience to the specular logic of the same" (Moi 1985, p. 133). In other words, Freud is engrossed in the logic of the same, with males deemed the only legitimate sex dominating and reproducing the "economy of the same" (Whitford 1991, p. 75). Following this logic of the same, Freud's theory is blind to female subjectivity, casting a little girl as generally the same as a little boy. Accordingly, she is not a little girl but a little man. Failing to perceive the penis but the clitoris, a girl will generate a sense of inferiority or deficiency, which illustrates Freud's theory of penis envy.

In other words, in Freudian theory, women are invisible to the male gaze, retreating to a vague existence in hysteria and ignorance. This is evidenced by Molly Sweeney and her mother, who are not only invisible to the male gaze but also to their self-reflection. According to Irigaray, sexual difference in patriarchal discourse is mostly based on visibility. For her, females are educated to reason with the logic of the same, to identify with and even intensify patriarchy-driven penis-envy theory. Undoubtedly, women are denied their status because, compared with their male counterparts, females are sexually void and substantially powerless (Irigaray 1985, p. 53). In a similar fashion, Cixous criticizes these biased sexual differences based on "having/not having the phallus" for Freud and the transcendental signifier proposed by Lacan (1981, p. 95). For her, the validity of this transcendental signifier compels women to play an inferior role, while simultaneously they are subject to and get to admire the phallic power. As a consequence, females are construed as negativity or lack of masculinity. They cannot speak freely, let alone become dominant. This fallacious "view theory" can be applied to Molly's case, in which Molly is forced to gain sight via an operation, only to find that the assumed ideal world of sight is even more nebulous than a sightless world. Frank urges Molly to undergo the operation merely from his naïve, selfish perspective: "Molly was going to see! I knew it! For all his perhaps! Absolutely no doubt about it! A new world—a new life! A new life for both of us!" (Friel 1996, p. 467). Frank's wholehearted enthusiasm is ironic, since the so-called "new-life" proves miserable in the end. Shortly after the operation, despite its transient "wonder," "surprise," and "delight," Molly experiences an unfamiliar and embarrassing world.

> But it was a very foreign world, too. And disquieting; even alarming. Every shape an apparition, a spectre that appeared suddenly from nowhere and challenged you. And all the movement—nothing ever still—everything in motion all the time; and every movement unexpected, somehow threatening. Even the sudden sparrows in the garden, they seemed aggressive, dangerous. (Friel 1996, p. 492)

Accompanied by disillusionment and despair, Molly's realization after the operation mirrors women's anxiety over an idealized sighted world constructed and promoted by males. Instead of regaining vision and delight, Molly only feels discomfort and intimidation before and after the eye operation.

As Cixous and Irigaray contend, the emphasis on sight derives from a patriarchal model, which poses threats to women's identity and development. Nonetheless, male characters in *Molly Sweeney* always evaluate others by watching and seeing something. For instance, from the beginning to the end, Molly is constantly the object of testing, studying, analyzing, and gazing. On one occasion she feels repugnant to others' intrusion to her peaceful life, saying "Tests—tests—tests— tests . . . . I must spend months and months being analyzed and answering questions and identifying drawings and making sketches" (Friel 1996, p. 496). Molly suffers from being analyzed and speculated on by the male gaze, which invariably results in her "illusions and distortions" (Friel 1996, p. 496). Crucially, in her book *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray argues that in Western history, male philosophers such as Plato and Freud always judge female bodies through a distorting speculum. The speculum is originally intended to be "an instrument for dilating cavities of human body for inspection" (1985, p. 183). However, males use it to reflect everything in their own patriarchal images. This prejudice has dominated Western thinking for centuries, which prompts Irigaray to articulate her critique: "But wherever I turn, whether to philosophy, science or religion, I find that this underlying and increasingly insistent question remains silenced" (1991, p. 165).

Apart from Molly, Dr. Rice's ex-wife Maria is also doomed to be watched, to be gazed at by men in the play. When recalling his memory of the funeral for Maria's lover Roger Bloomstein, Dr. Rice remarks:

> I watched Maria during the service. Her beauty had always been chameleon. She had an instinctive beauty for every occasion. And today with her drained face and her dazed eyes and that fragile body, today she was utterly vulnerable, and at the same time, within her devastation, wholly intact and untouchable. I had never seen her more beautiful. (Friel 1996, p. 505)

This testifies to the idea that women have often been objects of beauty judged by the male gaze. Dr. Rice anatomizes Molly with a medical speculum to restore her capability of sight. Having the same logic in mind, he inspects Maria as if she were a doll. Dr. Rice gazes at Maria's "dazed eyes" and "fragile body," yet she seems so remote from him, "wholly intact and untouchable" (Friel 1996, p. 505). Dr. Rice cannot access Maria mainly because he is ignorant of the fact that male gazing culture is totally incongruous with female's preference for touch and bodily movement. Notably, before the operation, Molly, a massage therapist by occupation, is happy, satisfied, and comfortable. The movement of her female body brings her pleasure and contentment.

IV. Writing with Her Own Body

Women feel ill at ease in the presence of the patriarchal gaze because they belong to the world of touch rather than the world of sight. According to Irigaray, men's penchant for gaze excludes women, whose main focus is touch, from the center of representation. Women's unique bodily perception is often denounced as a proof of their superficiality and even wantonness. Females are once and for all the objects of beauty and males' gaze (1981, p. 101). Without this realization in mind, males and females cannot deal with

relevant issues. Molly is urged to have an eye operation by her male partner, Frank, and is examined and inspected by Dr. Rice to restore her sight. The experiment is doomed to fail primarily because the female character is never meant to be living in the sighted world, insomuch as Molly feels confounded and terrified in the face of the probable regaining of her eyesight.

> Then there was the night I watched her through the bedroom door. She was sitting at her dressing-table, in front of the mirror, trying her hair in different ways. When she would have it in a certain way, she'd lean close to the mirror and peer into it and turn her head from side to side. But you knew she couldn't read her reflection, could scarcely even see it. Then she would try the hair in a different style and she'd lean into the mirror again until her face was almost touching it and again she'd turn first to one side and then the other. And you knew that all she saw was a blur. (Friel 1996, p. 494-95)

Understandably, Molly can see nothing but "a blur" because after the operation, the promising and mythical vision is merely a paradise sketched by males. The mirror she is facing now is only a magic mirror for males and males only. What makes her really delighted is her gesture—"trying her hair in different ways"—but following the masculine gaze logic, she endeavors to detect herself through the mirror, ending up gazing "listlessly at the black mirror" (Friel 1996, p. 495).

A comparative study of Molly's situation with Irigaray's theory of woman's autoeroticism can shed new light on the dilemma. As Irigaray maintains, women have long been subjugated to male phallic power. Women's pleasure is rarely mentioned in terms of sexual relationships. Derogatory terms such as "lack," "atrophy," or "penis envy" are characteristic of conventional female sexuality (1981, p. 100). Terrified and guilty, women have no choice but to embrace and identify with male values. However, for Irigaray, the autoeroticism of women distinguishes them from men. Whereas men depend on outside instruments, such as woman's genitals, for help, women's pleasure relies on the touch of two lips automatically and naturally. This world of touch offers women enormous happiness not because of its attachment to the static male sexual organ but because of its multiple approaches to specific female pleasure (1981, p. 100). For Irigaray, touch plays an important role in fighting against the "male gaze" discourse, simultaneously highlighting the specialty of female sexual difference. This unique bodily movement encompasses "nothing and everything" in the "privacy of this silent, multiple, diffuse tact" (1981, p. 103). According to Irigaray, only via this other sexual difference strategy can women develop their potential for female sexual desire independent of male dominance. To be entirely severed from "male" apron strings, a revolution against male-dominated sexuality is indispensable for Irigaray (1991, p. 166). This consciousness of and resistance to male dominance is badly lacking in Molly. Molly is naturally endowed with the ability to sense and feel things without any intrusion, but pitiably she fails to seize the power to her own advantage most of the time. Molly's eye operation is indicative of her submission to the world of the gaze, which brings her less pleasure than pain. Once in her childhood, when no one can identify the name of some flowers, Molly instantly gave the correct answer (Friel 1996, p. 497). Notwithstanding Molly's blindness, she is particularly sensitive to the world through touch at young age. Even after the failed operation, those tactile engrams, means by which memory traces are stored, are still vivid and tangible. Molly loses touch with this familiar tactile world only after a long period following the operation when finally she becomes insane in the vague, disturbing quasi-sighted world. When asked by Dr. Rice about what she has seen after the operation,

Molly replies, "Nothing, Nothing at all. Then out of the void a blur; a haze; a body of mist; a confusion of light, color, movement. It had no meaning" (Friel 1996, p. 483).

Molly's regression to the hazy, misty, and blurred spot poses an ironic contrast to women's subordinated status as specified in Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, in which she denounces Plato's misogynist delineation of women's wombs as the source of darkness and therefore ignorance (1985, pp. 243-55). Unlike traditional prejudice imposed on women, Molly is ironically trapped in males' cave with no light, no color, and no change. At first, Molly gets better in the new sighted world: "Her eyes were bright; unnaturally bright; burnished" (Friel 1996, p. 488). However, her brilliant vision shortly after the operation lasts only temporarily. Frank is quite aware that "she wasn't as joyous as she looked" (Friel 1996, p. 488). Even Dr. Rice acknowledges that Molly has been transformed into a less confident, independent, and jubilant woman: "How self-sufficient she had been then—her home, her job, her friends, her swimming; so naturally, so easily experiencing her world with her hands alone" (Friel 1996, p. 500). In Molly's case, the female tactile world, which is composed of her hand gestures and other bodily movements, is in actuality relentlessly replaced and ruined by the male sighted world, one which is never appropriate for women.

Irigaray's idea of female fluidity and multiplicity similarly sheds light on Molly's case. Such fluidity and multiplicity are detached from the sighted world, identifying instead with women's world of touch. As Irigaray argues, the style or writing of women "does not privilege sight; instead, it takes each figure to its source, which is among other things tactile" (1991, p. 126). For her, the women's world is not meant to be static, exclusive and unified. Before the operation, Molly enjoys multiple ways of pleasure from the graceful movement of her body. She is well qualified as a massage therapist in a local health club. Additionally, she feels excited about a range of physical things. For example, Molly expresses her comfort and happiness with bodily movement before the operation:

> And how could I have told those other doctors how much pleasure my world offered me? From my work, from the radio, from walking, from music, from cycling. But especially from swimming. I used to think—and I know this sounds silly—but I really did believe I got more pleasure, more delight, from swimming than sighted people can ever get. Just offering yourself to the experience – every pore open and eager for that world of pure sensation, of sensation alone—sensation that could not have been enhanced by sight—experience that existed only by touch and feel; and moving swiftly and rhythmically through the enfolding world; and the sense of such assurance, such liberation, such concordance with it. (Friel 1996, p. 466)

This excerpt is in line with Irigaray's assertion that bodily fluidity offers women the greatest satisfaction. Notably, Molly's pleasure from massage and swimming is absolutely incomprehensible to the other male doctors, who are accustomed to the sighted world. Her pleasure echoes what Irigaray proclaims to be multiple and indefinite. For Irigaray, women's pleasure is not confined to the either-or choice between clitoral activity and vaginal passivity. She stresses that women's sexuality, "always double, is in fact plural" (1981, p. 102). However, male characters in *Molly Sweeney* keep trying to discourage Molly from inhabiting the cosy tactile world. On several occasions in the play, Molly has to resort to her ability to touch and identify something, while Frank forces her to use "visual engrams" rather than "tactile engrams" to connect with the outside world (Friel 1996, p. 491). Molly's "guessing" through touch as opposed to males' "gaze" through teaching once again testifies to Irigaray's idea of sexual difference. Molly's father, Frank, and Dr. Rice are one and the

same because, despite their individual relationships with Molly, they play the same patriarchal role in diminishing Molly's pleasure from the world of touch. Like Molly's father, Frank and Dr. Rice are both judges who stare at and evaluate the female protagonist's body. Therefore, Molly is deprived of her habitual comfort and pleasure step by step.

Crucially, Molly is a distinguished swimmer and dancer, and the various gestures made for these activities are quite suggestive of a baby's movement inside the female body. Frank regards Molly as a "wonderful swimmer" (Friel 1996, p. 477). One the other hand, dancing for Molly demonstrates "the perfect, the absolutely perfect relaxation" (Friel 1996, p. 478). Molly's dance the night before the operation showcases "a form of expression closely connected with the female element" (Ojrzynska 2011, p. 262). In addition, Kristeva's notion of "the semiotic" is illuminating in explicating this phenomenon. For Kristeva, whereas the symbolic is a system under the law of the Father, the semiotic is the pre-Oedipal phase featuring the space of a mother's body. Incessant flows and movements in the semiotic are gathered up in the chora (the womb), which pulses and vibrates in numerous forms (Kristeva 1984, 26-39). Kristeva's semiotic space is one without certainty and limitation. Besides, this feminine space features energetic rhythms. Molly feels at home within this very space through actions such as swimming and dancing. She once recalled how swimming had brought her great joy, thinking that "the other people in the pool with me, the sighted people, that in some way their pleasure was actually diminished because they could see, because seeing in some way qualified the sensation"(466). She used to be so confident about her tactile life, dispensing and despising the sighted world. By means of swimming, Molly moves back to the mother's body and enjoys "moving swiftly and rhythmically through the enfolding world" (Friel 1996, p. 466). Unlike the world she experiences after the operation, the feminine, motherly, fluid atmosphere in the water grants her "such assurance, such liberation, such concordance" that remind readers of the mother-daughter relations in the pre-Oedipal phase (Friel 1996, p. 466). However, the operation dramatically changes her life for good. Intruded on by the masculine violence of gaze identification, Molly loses contact with the familiar, feminine tactile world, thereby becoming estranged from happiness and comfort.

Molly's identification with her mother comes late, slowly and miserably because only after the failed operation does she understand that both her mother and she are confined within the same "walled garden" of patriarchal power (Friel 1996, p. 455). Near the end of the play, Molly is haunted by her mother's phantom. As she describes,

> Mother comes in occasionally; in her pale blue headscarf and muddy wellingtons. Nobody pays much attention to her. She just wanders through the wards. She spent so much time here herself, I suppose she has an affection for the place. She doesn't talk much—she never did. But when she sits uneasily on the edge of my bed, as if she were waiting to be summoned, her face always frozen in that nervous half-smile. I think I know her better than I ever knew her and I begin to love her all over again. (Friel 1996, p. 508)

Molly's mother is like an exiled woman who is dressed in the "pale blue headscarf and muddy wellingtons" all the time. Nervous, uneasy and frigid, this mother figure represents the negative stereotype inscribed on women. At her young age, Molly had a vague impression of her mother's unhappiness; in adulthood, particularly after the eye operation, Molly has a better grip on the problem that women have in their everyday lives. Suffering and age provide her with a better understanding, making her identify with her mother and learn to love her mother again. Unlike the younger Molly who was closer to her father, the "sadder but wiser" Molly re-embraces her mother as her true

partner, as they are both exiled from the patriarchal society. This exile is reinforced when Mr. Rice refers to Molly on one occasion: "She had moved away from us all. She wasn't in her old blind world—she was exiled from that" (Friel 1996, p. 501). Nonetheless, as critic Tony Corbett specifies, ironically Molly's death seems to be impending because she is imprisoned in the same psychiatric hospital that once treated her mother (2008, p. 137). Both women are caged in the end.

Cixous has been committed to the destruction of the patriarchal hierarchy and to the announcement of *écriture féminine*. Dissatisfied with the phallocentric tradition in suppressing women's voice, she encourages women writers to explore their sexual difference and further construct their individual identity. In "The Laugh of Medusa," Cixous explicates her theory of woman for woman. For her, women get help mainly from other women: "It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was born to her" (1981, p. 252). In *Molly Sweeney,* the female character is aware of this woman-for-woman attachment because of her caring, helpful friend, Rita Cairn. As Molly says, "Rita probably knows me better than anybody" (Friel 1996, p. 471). The following description by Molly demonstrates Rita's role as the considerate, delicate, trustworthy female partner.

> As usual Rita was wonderful. She washed my hair, my bloody useless hair—I can do nothing with it—she washed it in this special shampoo she concocted herself. Then she pulled it all away back from my face and piled it up, just here, and held it in place with her mother's silver ornamental comb. (Friel 1996, p. 479)

No males will ever do what Rita does for Molly, things such as washing or combing her hair. Undoubtedly, these actions are relevant to women's bodily features, which is in accordance with the emphasis on women's tactile sensation discussed previously. Notably, the silver ornamental comb of Rita's mother metaphorically renders the rapport among women of different generations possible.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, men judge by sight, whereas women feel by touch. Regrettably, Molly fails to recognize this penchant for touch that is typical of female identity. She spends too much time resorting to outside help from men, such as her father, her husband, and her doctor, but only to find that these male others can never be her real rescuers. They cannot save Molly from blindness mainly because their visual viewpoints are far away from the tactile attributes characteristic of women.

Molly's case demonstrates that over-reliance on men only gives women a blurred vision, the kind of vision that the character of Molly literally represents. On the other hand, the freedom Molly discovers in the power of the movement of her own body suggests one way of approaching women's identity as difference in the Irish context. This possibility of representing a peculiar women's identity also finds powerful support in the way the play is presented, a panoply of monologs by the main characters without real communication, in which a traditionally muzzled female voice is granted equal opportunity for self-articulation. From this perspective, unlike most female figures merely characterized by "limiting, systematically destroying hope, passion, purpose," Friel's *Molly Sweeney* offers significant access for Irish women to self-discovery and self-identity in the ever-changing world (Harris 1997, p. 67). This echoes Hawk Chang's assertion that

contemporary Irish literature such as Eithne Strong's *Flesh: The Greatest Sin* highlights women's attempt to be liberated from age-old traditions of subjugation (2017, pp. 164-67). Notably, near the end of the play, Molly delivers a lengthy speech, which somehow signals Friel's privileging the female character by "valorizing the female voice" (Murray 2014, p. 155). As Seamus Heaney asserts, Friel's writings are "intent upon showing forth the different tensions, transgressions and transfigurations that occur once the line between the realm of actuality and imagination is crossed" (1993, p. 230). The only difference is that in *Molly Sweeney*, Friel demonstrates the tensions between men and women and recommends a potential sexual transgression and transfiguration.

The Education University of Hong Kong

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Narrating Terror: The Sound-Image Montage in Literature and Cinema with special reference to Gurvinder Singh's *Chauthi-Koot*

VIVEK SACHDEVA

> "Cinema's ability to capture the film-maker's vision draws the medium closer to the most foundational of the arts, poetry: […] Cinema at its best turns into poetry" (Ghatak as cited by Burnett 10)

The above statement by Ritwik Ghatak, blurring distinction between cinema and literature as ontologically different categories, hints at aesthetic convergence between literature and cinema. Despite their superficial differences, literature and cinema share a common ground on the basis of: one, as narrative art forms; two, the importance of image in their aesthetics. Despite a long history of iconoclasm and detestation for 'image' in the Christian world,[1] it has relentlessly asserted its presence in human imagination through art forms like painting, sculpture, mosaic and films. The presence of image can be seen even in literary genres like poetry and novels,[2] as visuality contributes majorly to the aesthetics of literature as well. Even Plato's theory of imitation rests heavily on the idea of image, though his reasons for discussing this relationship were different. Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero in their writings have contributed to the theory of image and representation in which image is understood in relation to *aesthesis*, *fantasia*, *cogitativa* and *memorativa*.[3] The gist of the argument is that image in no art form can be understood as a direct or linear representation of the world outside. It involves a process of distilling the inner image in the mind of the artist into an outer tangible representation. From the world of idea to imitation, Plato conceived a triad of image in which the persistence of image can be seen at three levels. Image is "an interplay between things in the world, mimemata (as a special kind of things in the world) and sensations/perceptions of things and mimemata (Sorbom 12). Image is, thus, central not only to pictorial or visual art forms, but also to poetry and narrative art forms too. From poetic image to novelistic image to the image in painting and cinema, image surrounds us in various forms. Image is all-pervasive; image is ubiquitous. To quote Rancière, "Image, properly speaking, are the things of the world" (Rancière 109). The above statement alters the conventional mimetic relationship between the image and the world on the one hand; and conventional perception of literature and cinema as ontologically different art forms on the other. Jacques Rancière's ideas on the 'sayable' and the 'visible' dimensions of the image, Eisenstein's theory of sound and image relationship in Vertical Montage and Michel Chion's idea of Audio-Vision destabilize the conventional understanding of the literary, the visual and the auditory.

"The sonic turn"[4] pays attention to the sonic or audio dimension of narratives. Many scholars (Claudia Gorbman, Elsie Walker, Rick Altman *et al*) have worked on film music

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and sound in relation to film theory and narrative. Recent developments in audionarratology provide the tools to understand the role sound plays in a narrative discourse. Audionarratology, which belongs to the post-classical narratology phase, studies how the sound contributes to the production of space(s) and meaning in narratives across media. It explores the possibility of studying interface between sound and narrative in radio plays, stage performances, audiobooks, films, TV and other narrative forms. This paper attempts to explore the interface between sound and image in both literature and cinema. In the present paper, sound is not understood - one, merely at the level of music, but it also includes other dimensions of the sonic spectrum of a narrative in the form of diegetic or non-diegetic sound; two, sound is not taken as a medium specific entity as sound is understood to be one of the dimensions of literary narratives as well. This paper contributes towards audionarratology by exploring the Sound-Image interface in verbal narratives and in film adaptation with reference to Gurvinder Singh's film titled *Chauthi Koot,* an adaptation of two short stories by Waryam Singh Sandhu, a Punjabi short story writer.

The theory of image in its various forms has dominated the film theory. Owing to Eisenstein's montage, Orson Well's theory of deep focus, Andre Bazin's realist image, Bergson's, Roland Barthes's and Deleuze's ideas, the image in cinema has undergone various philosophical shifts. In film theory, 'seeing' was once thought to be equal to understanding. Ever since the sound was introduced in films, 'seeing' a film began to include the faculty of 'hearing' too. The argument is sound in cinema is not redundant or subservient to the visual of cinema; rather it is as important and essential as the visual is. Elsie Walker opens her book *Understanding Sound Tracks through Film Theory* by quoting John Currie that cinema is "overall 70% sound" (Currie as quoted by Walker 1). It indicates that important position sound has acquired while understanding the cinematic image, which requires equal theoretical attention. There have been some studies which focus on various aspects of sound in cinema such as the history of sound design (Whittington); taxonomy and diegesis (Percheron 1980); sound design for film and television (Dakiæ 2009) and relevance of Eisenstein's ideas on sound and image in feminist films (Ging 2004) and sound and image as image (Mayfield).

According to Eisenstein's definition, montage is an editing technique in which contrasting shots or sequences are juxtaposed to create an emotional or intellectual effect on the minds of the viewers. Besides, Eisenstein's famous five kinds of montage, there is another kind of montage that can be explored in cinema. The creataive correspondence between sound and image, which results into the creation of meaning, in this paper is called as the Sound-Image montage. The Sound-Image montage in cinema is an interface wherein the sound complements the visual or the visual complements the sound to add to the meaning of the shot, which Michel Chion calls the Audio-Visual, an idea rooted in Eisenstein's theory of sound-image relationship in his later films. Sound-Image montage is not the conventional sound-visual synchronization, nor is it what William Whittington studies as sound design.[5] In films, the Sound-Image montage is the result of placing sound with visuals in a manner to enhance the emotional or intellectual response and convey meaning in a coded and subtle fashion. "Film sound can be used to connect inner and outer states in a less explicit way than do camera associations" (Hutcheon 41).

Literature, along with other dimensions, also possesses an auditory dimension. In literary narratives, the image or visuality is as important as musicality or sonic effects are important in poetry. Walter Sutton, referring to the debate between Ezra Pound and

Joseph Frank, deliberates the question of the ontology of literary image in poetry and novels.[6] In every narrative, there is an interaction between the visual and the sonic. The sonic dimension of literature is closely linked with the visual dimension and is a part of the form and function of a narrative. Michael Chion's discusses 'synchresis' as an automatic auditory imagination stimulated by the visual signs. As defined by Chion, synchresis is "the spontaneous and irresistible weld between the auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon … when they occur at the same time" (Chion 63). In literature, the sound is imagined even if there is no direct reference to it in the form of onomatopoeia. Jarmila Mildorf and Till Kinzel, while referring to Lewis's statement – "good reading is always aural as well as visual," (Mildorf and Kinzel Loc 476) – highlight that "on the purely textual level sound is inscribed in narratives and needs to be brought to attention" (Mildorf and Kinzel Loc 476). It is in this area that audionarratology provides useful and critical tools to understand "the sonic qualities of fictional texts" (Mildrof and Kinzel Loc 109/ 7027). The coded sound can be heard in other art forms such as literature or paintings - be it the music on the Grecian Urn that John Keats hears or the song of the solitary reaper in Wordsworth's poem or sounds of utensils and trains in modernist poetry; or in paintings such as Claude Lorrain's "Seaport at Sunset" (1639)[7]; or in Caspar David Friedrich's "Wanderer Above the Mist" (1818)[8]; or in Eugene Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" (1830). The argument is that as in painting, along with the visual is also present the imagined sound associated with the image. Both the imagined and the described sound, constitute an important element of narratives and contribute towards the narrative discourse.[9] The sound-visual interaction is integral to literary narratives, though its degree varies from narrative to narrative. However, in literature sound is not perceived by the olfactory senses as in literary narratives sound is imagined along with the visual, unlike films in which sound is present as an empirical sensory entity. The heard sound in films or the imagined sound in literature interacts with the visuals present in the narrative of the respective medium. The interaction between the two is integral to the overall aesthetic experience of any narrative across media. Both, the conceived image of literature and perceived image of films, occupy an auditory dimension which contributes towards creating meaning in the respective art forms.

Gurvinder Singh's *Chauthi Koot* is an adaptation of two short stories titled "Chauthi Koot" [10] and "Hun Main Theek Thak Haan" [11] by Waryam Singh Sandhu, a Sahitya Akademy Award winner Punjabi writer. Two stories by Waryam Singh Sandhu give an insight into the separatist movement of the 1980s in Punjab from two different points of view. Associated with the demand of a separate nation, the Khalistan movement in Punjab in the 1980s created a political question in front of India as a nation-state and a moral question in front of humanity. There were multifarious factors responsible for the emergence of the movement in the 1980s. Sekhon and Singh opine that while drafting the Hindu Marriage Act in 1950, the Congress party placed the Sikh community under the umbrella category of Hindus and the Anand Marriage Act of the Sikhs was replaced by the Hindu Marriage Act. The Sikh community perceived it as "refusal by the Congress party to recognize the independence of their religion" (Sekhon and Singh 45). Jugdeep S. Chima opines that the constant defeats of Akali Dal in the electoral politics; demand made by Jagat Singh Chauhan, a Punjabi expat; Akali Dal's constant demand for *Punjabi Suba*, organization of states along linguistic lines in India; violent conflicts between Sikhs and Nirankaris; assassination of Jagat Narain, the journalist; the rise of Bhindrawale and his arrest after Jagat Narain's murder were important reasons for the rise of the movement.

The movement which was against India as a State, divided the society of Punjab into Sikhs and Hindus. The period witnessed clashes between the Sikh and the police; the Sikh and the Nirankaris and several attacks on Hindu travelling in buses and trains. Many Hindu families became targets, who were kidnapped for ransom. Sometimes, Hindus were segregated, made to stand in a line and were shot dead. [12] Various such incidents of violence against the Hindu community gave the movement a communal complexion. In the popular perception, it created a binary of Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab resulting into a cleavage in the centuries-old syncretic culture of Punjab.[13] One of the effects of the period of extremism in Punjab was that everybody became paranoid of the other. Hindus were apprehensive of the Sikhs, the Sikhs were largely distrustful of the state armed forces, the police would suspect each Sikh to be a terrorist, which resulted into paranoia among the Sikhs in Punjab. People got divided along religious lines, and the State was suspicious of its citizen. Failure of the State to tackle the issue of violence perpetrated by militants gave Hindus a sense of insecurity. The gulf was widening not merely between the people and the State, but also among people.

Written by Waryam Singh Sandhu, "Chauthi Koot" and "Hun Main Theek Thaak Han," give a sensitive portrayal of the period of terror as lived by people across religious identities. Going beyond the binaries of Hindus and Sikhs, these stories show that both Hindus and Sikhs were victims of the period of militancy. Narrated from the point of view of a Hindu man, in "Chauthi Koot" silence brings to surface the yawning vacuum, depleting trust and widening gap among people. Raj Kumar and Jugal Kishore are travelling together in a bus. In the narratorial voice of Raj Kumar echo with "reverberations" [14] (Kuzmèová 2013) of his inner thoughts which reveal episodes from his memory about his cousin who, fearing the violent atmosphere of Punjab, refused to come to Punjab for a wedding; anxiety and worry of his and Jugal Kishore's family members if they don't reach home tonight, and the thoughts of a wedding of his colleague's daughter he is supposed to attend the next morning and a folktale about the fear of losing life told by his grandmother. Raj Kumar's first worry is to reach Jallandhar so that he could catch the last train to Amritsar. His anxiety and fear make him count the number of Sikhs and non-Sikhs travellers in the bus. They hardly talk to each other, which signifies the fear lurking at the back of their minds as they both fear threat to their lives while travelling by bus during the late evening hours. The silence between them, sparse conversations and long narrations of Raj Kumar's inner thoughts show unnerving anxiety, lurking fear and silently brewing disquiet in their minds. In the interface between the auditory and visual signs in literature, the narrative shows the effects of violence and terror on the minds of the people. The narrative does not move along the environmental sounds but focuses more on the cantankerous anxiety in the mind of Raj Kumar, which is juxtaposed with the silence between two characters. With the narrative structure of multiple narratives within the main narrative, Raj Kumar's memory throw light on varied aspects of the period of violence in Punjab. Visual descriptions in the story divulge terror lurking in the mind of the narrator and his co-traveller. They have almost similar experience at the railway station, where they are trying their luck to catch a train. They meet a Sikh man, who is also going to Amritsar. Despite their common destination, there is a hesitation in each one of them to help a stranger with a different religious identity. When they manage to enter the guard's compartment while catching the last train to Amritsar, they find that four men were already sitting in the compartment. All of them looked at Raj Kumar, Jugal Kishore and the Sikh man, but said nothing. "Owing to anxiety,

haste, fear and terror, my head was going numb. I started looking at everybody's face intensely sitting in the compartment" (Sandhu 18, 19).[15] The narrative reveals Raj Kumar's inner thoughts and the fear in his mind after seeing two Sikh men in the compartment. Silence among travelers in the compartment adds to suspicion and fear. "I found that silence to be conspiratorial. Owing to such silence, people like them, sit quiet and like a *Cheetah* look for an opportune time to attack and kill" (Sandhu 19).[16]

"Hun Main Theek Thaak Han", on the other hand, tells the story from the point of the view of the Sikh community. The story begins with highlighting silence at night disturbed by the dog's barking. Extremists have asked the family to kill their dog, as its barking threatens them. Husband and wife are so traumatized that in spite of their being awake at night, they hardly talk. There situation is such that silence haunts them and sound frightens them. They are terrorized as they are targeted both by the police forces and the extremists. The story also brings to the fore the Sikh community's hurt religious sentiments after the attack on the Golden Temple by the Government of India. Consequently, the distance between the Sikh community and the Indian state increases, and the question of the Sikh minority in the Hindu majoritarian state is raised afresh. This story juxtaposes silence in the house with the sounds like dog's barking or gunshots and tumult of people's protest on the streets of Punjab. With the use of silence and specific sounds that cut through the silence, the auditory dimension of the narrative creates the atmosphere of terror. In these two stories, the interface between visual descriptions and the noise of inner reverberations in the mind of the narrator or environmental sounds constitutes the Sound-Image montage creating an effect of terror. In "Chauthi Koot" by highlighting the onomatopoeic sound of train running over a bridge – *kharach kharach* – the narrative brings readers' attention to the yawning silence among travellers belonging to different religious identities in the guard's cabin. The lack of conversation is juxtaposed with the noise of thoughts and fear clamoring in the mind of the narrator and some environmental sounds, which makes silence in both the stories an effective device to narrate terror.

Gurvinder Singh graduated from Film and Television Institute of India in 2001. Later, Mani Kaul, the famous Indian avant-garde filmmaker became his mentor. The influence of Mani Kaul and other international filmmakers like Godard and Abbas Kiarostami is evident in his non-imitative cinema. In the film adaptation, these two stories are interwoven into a single narrative which allows the filmmaker to include the Hindu and the Sikh perspectives in one narrative. Gurvinder Singh's cinematic image does not rest on its denotative value. The image is not merely a tool of story telling in the sense it 'imitates' the outside empirical world. Challenging the Platonic concept of imitative image, the image in his cinema breaks the boundary of linear communication between the object and imitation to enter the zone of abstraction. Transcending the limits of denotation, it dwells on connotative value of each visual. Rather than being subservient to events, the image in his film is eloquent and evocative. The 'affect' that his image produces on the minds of the audience reveals the space within the character and also redefines the space around the characters. In the film, Gurvinder Singh's cinematic image plays heavily on visuals and silences. The use of close-up shots, looks of terror juxtaposed with a cavernous silence among different characters highlight the fear lurking in every character's mind and the mounting lack of trust among human beings. The attempt of the filmmaker is to create a cinematic composition, with the play of visuals and sound/silences, expressing the inner world of characters. It cannot be denied that the nature of cinematic image is such that cognition of a film begins with the sensory perception of the image and the

outer world; but in the hands of Gurvinder Singh the cinematic image opens up to possibilities of exploring the inner world of characters and the space between different characters. Watching the film is like to experience latent anxieties, fears and insecurities becoming tangible. The perception of the sensory image in his film finally leads to the conceptual affect, an idea conceived by the filmmaker. The inner conceptual image of the filmmaker, which is "crucial to the production process which can be seen as the creation of an outward perceptual object to become isomorphic to the inner image" (Sorbom 23), determines the form and function of the outward image in his film.

In the film, the use of diegetic, non-diegetic or extra-diegetic sound "constructs and enriches the diegesis" (Percheron 18). The first level narrative in the film deals with two middle-aged Hindu men, who have missed their last train to Amritsar. The sense of urgency is vividly written on their faces as they are anxious to catch the last train to Amritsar. Unlike the story, the film narrative does not reveal reverberations in the mind of Raj Kumar. They get down from a bus to catch the train and walk hurriedly towards the station. Before they could enter the station, the train starts. What we hear is only the sound of the train without seeing it. The scene cuts into another scene in which policemen are shown walking in a synechdochic shot (only their feet) with guns in their hands signifying the social and political environment of Punjab in the 1980s. At the platform, they meet a Sikh gentleman who is also going to Amritsar. A montage brings to surface the tension in the undercurrents of the narrative. These two men are sitting quietly on the railway platform bench, policeman is getting his boots polished, a poor man is smoking a *bidi*.[17] The hard-hitting silence in the scene is broken by the sound of the approaching train. They request the guard of the train to let them in. The guard of the train refuses to help them. When the train is leaving the station, they manage to slip into the guard's compartment. When they enter the compartment, they are shocked to see a couple of young Sikh fellows already sitting there, which increases suspicion in their minds. They all are looking equally terrified. Silence among travelers and the loud sound of the train highlights the void among them. The slow movement of camera and close-ups are used to highlight their isolated and terrorized state. As in every frame, each character is alone.

The narrative undergoes a temporal and spatial shift. Fading away sound shifts the scene to the second narrative which revolves around Joginder Singh. A Hindu couple visits their relatives at night. The husband wants to ask somebody the path as they have lost their way at night. He loudly announces his problem to the man who calls from inside the house. After some time the gate opens, and Joginder Singh comes out. Joginder sees them off to the boundary of the village and comes back home. While he is lying in his bed, he cannot sleep. Suddenly the dog starts barking. Soon a gunshot is heard. Joginder Singh is alarmed and terrified. He asks his family members to take the dog inside. He goes out and calls in the Sikh separatists moving outside. Four of them enter the house and jostle Joginder for not having killed the dog, as they have instructed him. In the scene, the camera shows the power dynamics between the ordinary Sikh family and the Sikh extremists. Before they are about to leave the house, Joginder stands at the threshold of the room and a member of the group gives him a threatening look.

In spite of the strong emotional bond with the dog, the next morning Joginder Singh mixes pesticide in a bowl of curd and gives it to the dog. All members of the family are sitting there and watching. Dog's death is averted when a team of CRPF comes and searches their house. They search every corner of the house. The Sikh family is caught between the militants and the CRPF. The dog which the militants want them to kill is

shot at by the CRPF soldier, which the dog miraculously survives. Shooting the dog is followed by a montage of dark clouds and a storm in the village. The montage shows dust rising in the village street, crops shaken by strong winds. Using frame within frame technique, the filmmaker shows the scene from the vantage point of Joginder Singh's room highlighting the window bars which signifies their state of captivity in their own home. Frightened by recent developments, Joginder Singh's wife wants him to kill the dog, which is difficult for them to do. One night, when the dog is barking incessantly, fearing that barking dog would invite troubles from the extremists, Joginder Singh hits the dog hard. The next morning, the dog is found lying dead in the courtyard.

The narrative comes back to the first level of narrative. All characters are sitting silently and an eerie silence prevails in the guard's cabin. The sound of the train running on the track is loud. Before the train reaches the railway station of Amritsar, all of them are dropped off by the guard in the outskirts of the railway station. Taking quick paces, Hindu travellers start walking immediately. They are frightened by the Sikh co-travellers walking behind them. After catching them the Sikh young men tell the Hindu travellers their story and request the Hindus to take them along. They fear that if they are found walking alone at night by the CRPF or the Police, they will be taken as terrorists, and might be shot dead. All of them start walking hurriedly with anxiety in their paces.

In the film, the dog becomes the central metaphor which brings to surface the multifarious nature of the Punjab problem. The question of killing a pet raises the fundamental question of morality in front of people caught in the quagmire of violence. The question reflects the crisis of human values in the times of conflicts, violence and distrust. The same loss of trust in human relationships is exhibited in the other story in the same narrative. Six men travelling together in the guard's compartment hardly speak to one another. Rather than adapting events in two stories with one to one correspondence, Gurvinder Singh in his film has focused on adapting terror, its impact on human psyche and relationships. The film does not offer a spectacle of violence; rather it makes the viewers experience terror at the level of mind. The aesthetics of the film rests upon a nuanced portrayal of emotions moving in the undercurrents of the situation. The film hits the viewers not because of melodrama or the flamboyant use of camera; rather because of the exact opposite of these elements. Long shots, lesser use of dialogues, long silences, slow-paced editing and accentuated diegetic sound, work together to create the effect of terror in the minds of the audience. The filmmaker gives more time to a situation in the narrative to let it produce an affect. By delaying the information, a style of filmmaking very close to "Mani Kaul's non-representational cinema" (Burnett 2013), the filmmaker explores emotions through the use of Sound-Image montage. Gurvinder Singh, a student of Mani Kaul, who was influenced by Bresson, like his mentor uses camera "to suppress and delay expressivity" and his style of filmmaking "withholds access to […] emotional reactions" (Burnett 4) of characters, but without compromising on the narrativity in this film. The image in his cinema is not iconic giving information of the outer world; rather it is evocative. It unravels the underlying emotion, anxiety, fear, distrust of people caught in a situation. Gurvinder Singh has placed sound in the narrative at an equal footing with the visuals in the film. Sometimes, the filmmaker defies the conventional relationship of "audiovisual complementarity" (Walker 14) between the image and the sound. The sound of the train running on the tracks, the train crossing the bridge and other diegetic sounds are more pronounced than the usual. The aural and visual signs work in sync with each other to enhance experientiality of the narrative. Diegetic or non-diegetic aural

signs acquire their meaning while they are played along with the visual sign in the given context. It would be erroneous to ascribe a fixed meaning or function to any aural sign in this context as aural signs "can in principle assume any narrative function within a specific context" (Huwiler Loc 2278), but the Sound-Image montage in the film works to convey the sense of terror to the audience.

The play of silence is another important aspect of the Sound-Image montage as used by the filmmaker. The meaning in the film resides in the haunting silences. Emotions running in the undercurrents of the film become palpable through the use of diegetic sound and accentuated silence. Emphasis given to the diegetic sounds, minimalist dialogues and the use of silence with close-up shots enter into a creative interaction with the narrative of the film. Silence among co-travelers in the train, the sound of men's footsteps, dog's barking, Joginder Singh's being terrorized by both CRPF and Khalistan forces, Joginder Singh's silence, clamor of announcements made on the loudspeakers, people marching towards the Golden Temple while singing holy verses from the Guru Granth Sahib and other verses from Punjabi literature invoking the idea of the militant Sikh identity – through all signs of sound, through the presence and absence, in its acousmatic or visualized zone, the Sound-Image montage in the film enhances the meaning.

As Eisenstein describes, "art actually begins from the moment when a combination of sound and picture does not simply reproduce a connection existing in nature but establishes a connection demanded by expressive requirements" (Eisenstein 334). The Sound-Image montage in the aesthetics of Gurvinder Singh's cinema dismantles the conventional structure and breaks away from the narrative patterns of mainstream cinema as well as (socialist) realism. The play of sound and silence contributes in slowing down the narrative time and adds to the spatiality of the narrative. By slowing down the narrative pace, the filmmaker creates an aesthetic effect and a higher level of narration and meaning. Sound in the film does not merely add linearized temporality to the narrative; rather it brings to the surface inherent tension in the situation. The filmmaker's attempt is to adapt trauma with its psychological and social dimensions. The violence or terror lies in its psychological impact on the human mind, inter-personal relationships and man's relationship even with animals. Gurvinder Singh does not construct his Sound-Image montage through linear synchronization between sound and image. The relationship between sound and image in his film is more of a structural unit performing the expressive function while narrating events. The *obraz* or the generalized image expresses trauma in cinema of which the Sound-Image interface is the central unit.

The image in cinema is "not content, but container" (Chion 67) of information and meaning. David Bordwell's statement that a narrative mobilizes "all sorts of material properties of the medium, in a wide variety of manner" (Bordwell 2004: 207) gives space to open verbal and film narratives to the tools of audionarratology. Sound in literature and film engages the sense mode and "can actively shape how we interpret the image" (Bordwell and Thompson 181) in different media. The sound is not secondary to the visuals; rather it is one of the disparate elements colliding to make a new meaning, in Eisenstein's terms. "Therefore his use of filmic music, unlike that in classic film, did not merely complement the image track as an add-on dimension, but was rather interwoven into a complex whole" (Ging 11). According to Ging, Eisenstein understands the difference between depiction and generalized image or *obraz* in cinema who believed that sound and image in cinema are bound with each other through the logic in inner synchronicity

and movement. The theoretical frame of audionarratology, Chion's 'synchresis' and extension of Sound-Image montage to literary narratives open aural dimension of literature to analysis. The auditory dimension of literary and film image is capable of stimulating new meaning to literary or cinematic phrases. This paper has attempted to understand the cinematic and literary image through its aural axis. Sound also performs the function of binding the visuals in temporal terms, adding meaning to the shot and also adding spatiality to the films. Literature being a verbal art form depends on the reader's imagination for its cognition and aesthetic experience. The mental images of literature "don't seem to be visual the way real pictures are; they involve all other senses" (Mitchell 507). Along with visual descriptions and images, various kinds of sounds embedded in the narrative come alive in the reader's imagination. Extending Elsie Walker's ideas on "film musicality" (Walker 2015: 4), audio elements in this paper are seen in relation to "all the interconnected elements" (Walker 2015: 4) of narratives. Narrator's voice, speeches by characters, their dialogues, loud cries, hush whispers, sounds of a vehicle and all forms of silences – all belong to the soundscape of a narrative.

The attempt has not been to understand a linear or direct correspondence between audio patterns of a narrative and visual representation; rather to explore potentialities of auditory signs in the narrative discourse. As Elke Huwiler, while commenting on the sound in radio plays, says that the sign system of voice cannot be "equated with the sign system of language, although the two are closely connected" (Huwiler Loc 2254), it is the same with aural and verbal signs in literature. In every narrative, the relationship between sound and visuals is unique. The sound-visual relationship in literature is different from that of in films. In film narratives, sound is perceived; whereas in verbal narratives, the sound is imagined. In literature, sound has no physical or empirical entity. It comes alive in reader's imagination, which is central to its existence and function in the narrative. In Waryam Singh Sandhu's stories, the visuality of each characters loneliness, fear, inability to connect with others and terror are central, which constitute the 'nub' of these stories, are enhanced further in the film by Gurvinder Singh. The filmmaker has woven two different tales told from two different perspectives into one narrative. Rather than performing the representational function, the Sound-Image montage in Gurvinder Singh's film narrates the emotional intensity of the situation. The use of film language in the film makes the image packed with thought and emotions making the composition evocative, yet intellectual. The use of flashback, close-ups, enhanced sound and its relationship with the visual, and play of silences are the basis of the Sound-Image montage in this film contributing towards cinematic translation of terror.

Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, India

Notes

[1] This statement also invokes Robert Stam's counting of various reasons of contempt against the visual medium. For details, please see the Introduction of *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo.

[2] W. J. T. Mitchell, using Wittgenstein's ideas to theorize image, gives a brief genealogy and categorization of images in the essay "What is an Image".

[3] These ideas have been borrowed from Sorbom's essay on Image. For details, please go to Works Cited.

[4] For details, please refer to *Audionarratology*. Ed(s). Jarmila Mildrof and Till Kinzel.

[5] William Whittington has studied sound design, a term introduced by Walter Murch, to describe the sound of *Apocalypse Now*. Whittington gives a detailed historical account of the origin of the term and its use in Hollywood. Whittington finds the roots of sound design in sound montage, which Whittington believes first featured in films by George Lucas.

[6] Sutton raises the question if the whole work can be read as an image, which opens up the possibility of reading image not in parts of a work, but in the entire narrative.

[7] The painting suggests the sounds of human activity in the evening at the seaport.

[8] The painting signifies the Romantic quietude.

[9] Bert Haanstra's *Glas* (1958) uses different two different kinds of sounds – one while showing the handmade crystal and second, while showing the machine made glass bottles. A. Thoma studies how Guy Debord's *Hurlments en faveur de Sade* inverts the image-sound relationship; the sound of boiling rice in Ritwik Ghatak's *Megha Dhake Tara*; Godard's use of sound in his films are famous examples which validate the point that sound is an integral part of the meaning in films.

[10] The Fourth Direction (Translation is mine)

[11] Now I Am Fine (Translation is mine)

[12] The author of the paper lived in Punjab in the 1980s. Some incidents referred to in this paper are based on author's memory.

[13] This idea is rooted in the historical context in which Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, three important religious communities of Punjab, have lived together. There are many cultural practices in terms of food, folk songs, poetry and music which are common among them since medieval times.

[14] Ane•ka Kuzmèová's ideas on inner reverberations and outer reverberations have been used by Ivan Delarazi in the article titled "Voicing the Split Narrator: Readers' Chores In Toni Morrison's "Recitatif".

[15] Translation is mine.

[16] Translation is mine.

[17] *Bidi* is indigenous cigarette, which is made of rolled leaf. It is shorter in size than a cigarette.

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"And Kabir Stands in the Marketplace": Politics and Poetics in an Era of Global Strife

DEBJANI BANERJEE

This paper is being written at a definitive crossroad in South Asian politics as religion and state vie to gain dominance over one another. Violence, in the name of religion, is a commonplace in the world today (Asad, Blee and Creasap, Bhatt, Troch). In the Indian sub-continent, nationalism is the new buzzword which has been excavated, as it were, from the era of anti-colonial struggles, when it worked as an enabling concept to fight imperialism. Within a renewed vigor of nationalism which continues to exclude women and the Dalits, a new normative discourse of nationalism based on majoritarian religious ideology has been taking shape. Various stereotypes of aggression, links to terrorism and other accusations of violence are tied together to construct the Other that needs to be controlled and subdued. (Anand 23) On the other hand, nationalism becomes an increasingly sanctified word that is ostensibly value neutral; the overt language of nationalism is really about suppression of minority discourse not yet prefixed with the word Hindu but all but moving towards that. As several critics have pointed out, the main target of this hyper nationalism is often the Indian Muslim community. (Bhatt, Jaffrelot) While the separatist movements of the eighties and the vacuous ideologies of secularism can be blamed for this, the new nationalism mandated by electoral arithmetic is posing serious challenges to a democratic trajectory in India. In his essay "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety" written right after the violence of Ayodhya, Ashutosh Varshney had demonstrated the possibility of a civilizational end to India if "BJP came to power supported by the right wing." (258) The elections of 2019 have seen an unprecedented majority of the ruling party supported by its right-wing factions.

Ideologically and in terms of realpolitik, there is much that is at stake in the current socio- political scenario in India. Communities are polarized and violence is often the manifestation. Within this larger framework, I offer Kabir's poetic praxis as an intervention into the cultural understandings of identity in the light of contemporary debates about minorities and secular citizenship within the nation space. The argument, based on the work of Shabnam Virmani, filmmaker, musician and the co-creator of archives and a web museum on Kabir, demonstrates the politics of cultural representation; it also interprets and analyzes Kabir's music and poetry in order to explore the aesthetics of belonging. Here are some lines that are seen as typically Kabir and that could be resonant in contemporary times:

> Alakh (the Invisible) and Elahi (the Lord) are one, with two names/
> Ram and Rahim are one, with two names
> Krishna and Karim are one, with two names
> Kashi and Kaaba are but one, with two names. (Hess)

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Kabir's upbringing, arguably in an environment of economic hardships, and as part of a marginalized community, the Julahas, had exposed him early in life to the nuances of difference as experienced through identity politics (Hess). Kabir had later taken on the Hindu-Muslim debate, uttering complexities in simple ways. Without mincing words, he declared Kashi — another name for Benares, revered as a holy pilgrimage by Hindus and Kaaba — the Muslim holy shrine — were the same, just known by different names. Like his unifying world view, Kabir himself embodies the synthesis that Benares is — where generations of his own ilk of Muslim weavers and devout Hindus worshipping the Ganga and its mythological creator, Shiva, have lived next to each other without much ado or incident. It is no wonder that he has been called iconoclastic and it is perhaps this quality of his that we can harness for our times.

Kabir is a 15th century mystic poet and singer and his probable dates are1440-1518. His birth and origins are shrouded in mystery. Linda Hess, arguably the most well-known Kabir scholar in American academia, has shown conclusively that his understanding of religion, his immersion was deeply in Hindu structures of thought (256). The name, Kabir, however, is clearly of Islamic origin. While there is so little written evidence, these stray facts are definitive—he grew up in a Muslim weaver's family, he sang songs and he went to the marketplace. He was born in Kashi/Varanasi, one of the primary religious destinations for Hindu devotees and, he could not be clearly identified as Hindu, Muslim or Yogi. The important thing about Kabir is that he started an oral tradition that has survived centuries. Thousands of verses are attributed to him but only a few written collections have survived the centuries. Much of his work has been divided into dohas, padaks and bijaks. Some Kabir scholars have claimed that he was not uniformly liked in his time but once he died there was much strife over claiming his dead body between the Hindus and Muslims. "Kabir had no patience for either the religion of the temple or the mosque," said the eminent Kabir scholar Purushottam Agarwal. "He drew from the knowledge base of both Hindu and Islamic traditions, but his spirituality went beyond any religion. He was a rationalist who wasn't afraid to question or criticize anyone (Agarwal)." This is indicative of some amount of anxiety that he must have caused even during his life- time through his poems and songs which are articulate, in their critique of religion. For example:

> Does Khuda, live only in the mosque?
> Is Ram, only in idols and holy grounds?
> Have you searched and found Him there?
> You imagine that Hari [Vishnu] is in the East, and Allah is in the West;
> But search for Him only in the heart-that is where Ram and Karim both rest. (Hess and Singh 73-74)

Historians and historians of religion have studied Kabir within the framework of the Bhakti movement. The Bhakti movement was not a concerted movement but more a stringing together of multiple religious reformers, saints, poets through the rejection of organized religion and the generative principle of bhakti or devotion. (Novetzke). Common scholarly conventions interpret bhakti to mean "personal devotion" or a sentiment of intimacy with a deity, but the term is also used in highly abstract contexts where the "personal" is not present. In any case, both in scholarship and within the Indian public sphere, bhakti denotes a "movement" of social protest against caste, class, religious, or gender inequities. Many scholars including Christian Lee Novetzke refer to a "bhakti movement" as a heterogenous field of texts and practices produced and

maintained in South Asia since the sixth century Common Era but it is since the 12th century that it gained momentum. The kernel of the Bhakti movement was in the message of love, and the relationship between God and the devotee was re-defined by love and faith rather than divisive mechanisms. Bhakti movement had made a lasting impression on Hinduism as it is practiced today, claims Karine Schomer, in her book *Sant Traditions*. It is what gives "present-day Hinduism its emotional texture, its spiritual and social values, and its basic philosophical assumptions." (Schomer 121)

Most importantly, the Bhakti movement proves that Kabir was not alone. Tukaram, Namdeo, Mira Bai, Nanak were all speaking against formal religion. This is important as there are a group of scholars have been claiming that caste system never existed in the Hindu religion and it was a colonial construct[1] There were others who were thinking about religion and trying to understand ways in which dominant practices of religion were exclusionary and could be re-defined. To some extent all of them, were extolling a personal relationship with God but Kabir was specifically relocating this quest within the person: Kabir says: "Student, tell me, what is God? /He is the breath inside the breath. (Hess) An eminent scholar of Kabir, Puroshattam Agarwal, has written of this time frame and convincingly argued that modernity had arrived in India long before the British did; in the west, modernity in the sense of the spirit of critique and questioning had to come in to be able to question religion and in India this was already being done in the 16th century. This spirit of inquiry was most manifest in Kabir's works:

> If God be within the mosque, then to whom does this world belong?
> If Ram be within the image which you find upon your pilgrimage,
> Then who is there to know what happens without?

In poems and songs like these, Kabir is foreshadowing a Kantian moment. In other poems, his utterances are more complex:

> Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat. My shoulder is against yours.
> You will not find me in the stupas, not in Indian shrine rooms,
> Nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals:
> Not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding around your own neck, nor in eating nothing but vegetables.
> When you really look for me, you will see me instantly –you will find me in the tiniest house of time. (Hess)

Here "me" is a troubling entity; is it God, one's own self or spirituality? Most singer saints who are part of the Bhakti movement or Sufi singers define God and Enlightenment in terms of love. They are lovers and God is their beloved. But for Kabir, self-realization is the true enlightenment. Linda Hess has an animated chapter on the relationship between spiritualism and political commitment in *Bodies of Song* which throws light on the ways Kabir's work can be relevant in understanding the relationship between state and religion. (392) The rest of the song, quoted above, is an embedded social critique of religious practices; most of his songs are similar – strident, articulate and at the same time enigmatic.

The current political scenario in South Asia is fraught with layers of debates on nationalism is a good point at which Kabir's stories can be told and re-told. And Kabir needs to be narrated and performed. In my attempts to understand Kabir, I have drawn inspiration from the works of Shabnam Virmani who runs the Kabir project in India.[3] She has made four films on Kabir and she is in the process of putting together a massive archive on the poet-singer. Her documentary film *Had Anhad* is a journey to connect

with Kabir and the exponents of Kabir's music in remote areas of India as well as in Pakistan. The metaphor of the journey, literal and figurative, signifies different destinations and new starting points. Virmani's journey, which begins in Ayodhya is entrenched in Kabir's question: Do the different Gods live only in specific sites? This questioning, brought about through the musical rendition of various artistes, gives us a sense of the transformative power of Kabir.

This spirit that we find across Kabir's lyrics is also the spirit that imbues Virmani's film. Virmani offers a beautiful tapestry of music through singers like Mukhtiyar Ali and Farid Ayaz. She spends a long time with each singer as they share their stories and melodies, and each share their unique understanding of Kabir. Subtle nuances apart, all are in unison on one point – Kabir was impatient with the trappings of organized religion

> Where do you search me?
> I am with you
> Not in pilgrimage, nor in icons
> Neither in solitudes
> Not in temples, nor in mosques
> Neither in Kaba nor in Kailash
> I am with you O man
> I am with you
> Seek earnestly and discover
> In but a moment of search
> Says Kabir, Listen with care
> Where your faith is, I am there.

As we watch the film, we realize that each practitioner has an interpretation of Kabir that is complex, rooted in their own experience but never quite contradictory. "No one knows Kabir like I do." claims Farid Ayaz in the film. (*Had Anhad*) He describes Kabir as an earthquake which threatened to demolish all kinds of shrines – mosques and temples. This is a particularly sensitive topic as Virmani's film begins at the point where a mosque has been destroyed as it had allegedly been built over the birthplace of Rama, the hero of the epic tale *Ramayana* and who is worshipped as a God. The film's political positioning is clear but nuanced.

Virmani portrays conversations and interactions and uses voice over very minimally. The audience is encouraged to experience the music as well as the conversations, and this technique blurs the lines between documentary and fiction film. The different voices are juxtaposed and the singers and speakers are given equivalent space and time. In her body of work, the filmmaker, Virmani uses what E Ann Kaplan has called "creative treatment of actuality" (206). The film offers a montage of places: Ayodhya/Karachi, the barrenness of desert at the border and the vibrance and clamor of post-colonial cities on either side of the border. It is also an assemblage of people, impressions, climates, culinary moments, exaggerated border routines of the armies, and of Ram, the mythological figure, his detractors and worshippers, and most importantly, of Kabir the icon-in-the-making. Virmani's 'creative treatment of actuality' maps the cultural interstices across geo-political borders and clears a space for intervention which resonate with Kabir's music and poetry.

Had Anhad (*Bounded-Boundless*) offers a different way of thinking through faith, intersectionality between communities, secularism, the relationship between religion and state. It offers ways of mobilizing people and involving communities that are positive, energized and inclusive. Virmani's particular strength, in fact, has been the ability to tell

affective stories through a deliberately minimalist video camera, hand held, and through focused images of bodies and objects – singing faces, hands playing instruments, vocal participation and expressive countenances, and with all these mechanisms she is able to draw the viewer into the experiences of those bodies. Virmani, the person, does not occupy a very visible position in the documentary; we hear her speaking and engaging in conversations as if she were approaching the artistes she interviewed but she never claims to know them or speak for them. They are never the objects of her quest. E Ann Kaplan while writing about Trinh T Minha's work has written, "She seeks a position that functions in the gap, namely speaking nearby (208)." The phrase conveys an idea of closeness that involves approaching the other rather than knowing them. This closeness between communities and people of different religions who are caught up in continuing wars and border skirmishes is a significant point being made in Had/Anhad. Virmani has been trying to communicate through her film and her work in the Kabir archives that connections between communities is important at all levels; that is where the word secularism and the concept behind it can be re-invigorated and Kabir can offer a great multi-dimensional platform.

Kabir's songs, when performed, offer something that is part of a holistic and "embodied" experience says the filmmaker/singer (personal interview). This embodiment is what she is suggesting creates a transformative space. Embodiment is linked to a totality of experience, immersion and participatory listening. A committed listening and a committed performance are both inseparable aspects of embodied experiences. Bernadette Wegenstein, a documentary film maker and theorist has also written in detail about a fully interactive and embodied approach. (Wegenstein 63, 64) Shabnam Virmani's film *Bounded-Boundless* conclusively shows the importance of the embodied approach through her journeys and her interactions with the performers. This embodiment also serves as a link between communities and people. Linda Hess asserts about Kabir — 'To know Kabir, you should know people (26)." In her book, *Bodies of Song*, she re-iterates that oral traditions are connected with people; "where I see the importance of oral tradition is the way in which poets and texts are constructed by people and in oral traditions, one can see that process in action" (289). Kabir's poetic praxis is about people; and as we see in Virmani's film, every singer adds an interpretation to Kabir and thus the community expands. People's participation and their remembrance of the words and the song makes it possible for us to recount him today.

Virmani's representation of Kabir's songs and poetry intervenes positively in the project of identity making; additionally, it seeks to answer the question--what are some of the enduring values that can define the pluralistic form of Indian identity? The identity making project has been usurped in post colonial India by the binary of secularism and religion and one of the consequences of this has been the right wing religious revival of fringe elements in contemporary times. There are many reasons that can be associated with this rise of religious extremism. Foremost amongst these is the emptiness of secularism as it is practiced in India. One variant of it is about electoral appeasement and vote bank rationality—and this is irrelevant in a scenario where people want an identity. This search for identity is particularly strong in the diasporic Indian community (Sud). The extent of support Hindutva elements have in the US shows us that this community identity formation extends to diasporas also; this, then, is not exclusive to the geo-political space (Sud). It is a transnational phenomenon that reifies the beliefs of a majoritarian nationalism. This project of identity in the making is very important and needs to be

paid heed to in the war against right wing groups working towards converting India to a Hindu nation; several policy manoeuvres including emphasis on looking for an original and authentic Hindu identity have challenged the diverse and heterogenous culture of the Indian nation space. As a result, this political juncture probably offers us multiple possibilities of identity formation. One of the main ways of achieving a secularization of the community is through identity formation. However, identity can be too easily fetishized, especially cultural identity which in the name of ethnic nationalisms can wreak havoc and play right along the lines of right-wing extremism. But cultural identity is not something that can be wished away within in course of the quest for secular nationalism. Aditya Nigam in his book, *The Crisis of Secular Nationalism in India*, which is sub-titled *The Insurrection of Little Selves* has argued that secularism has failed because the quest for identity has been misunderstood and been made subservient to universal rational discourses which are primarily elitist. More importantly, he has used the work of historians including Partha Chatterjee to show the importance of identity and I quote: "colonial subjugation does something to the [national] enterprise by making it open to all kinds of xenophobic articulations" (308). Arjun Appadurai has called it the crisis of modern subjectivity and he has linked it to the rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts, and sensations (21). However one theorizes it, the politics of identity is crucial. In this quest for identity, Kabir's poems which have traditionally been sung, have much to offer in their spiritual and inward turn and their critique of society. In their focus on human elements of a civilization, they are significant aesthetic work of our times. Their social and political commentary is relevant to the post colonial nation's shifting negotiations of identity, nationalism and secularism. Kabir's poetic praxis has a language and thematic trajectory that is spiritual and yet extremely political. Kabir, probably, could not read or write. (Hess) Yet, his verses are studied by large numbers of school children across north India. David Lorenzo has argued about the merits of reading Kabir, in addition, to performing his songs, as it makes it possible to ponder on the meanings at one's leisure. If we are to use Kabir's poetic praxis across the country, it is important to keep alive the practice of reading Kabir.

The accessibility of Kabir's poetry is also linked to the language. His verses are composed in Hindi and not Sanskrit; Sanskrit was the language connected with religion and it was often the prerogative of upper caste scholarly practices. But Kabir's compositions are in Hindi and they also use common metaphors and symbols drawn from daily life – markets and temples, boats and rivers, clay and idols. They are about the common people and their daily activities and struggles:

> And Kabir stands in the marketplace
> Wishes well for all and one
> He is not friends with any
> And enemies he has none.

These daily spaces and experiences are what makes Kabir's poetry and music very relevant even today.

> Having crossed the river,
> where will you go, O friend?
>
> There's no road to tread,
> No traveler ahead,
> Neither a beginning, nor an end.

There's no water, no boat, no boatman, no cord;
No earth is there, no sky, no time, no bank, no ford.

You have forgotten the Self within,
Your search in the void will be in vain;
In a moment the life will ebb
And in this body you won't remain.

Be ever conscious of this, O friend,
You have to immerse within your Self;
Kabir says, salvation you won't then need,
For what you are, you would be indeed.

The reason scholars have found him secular and secular is the evolved understanding of self in Kabir's works which resonates with our concerns today. (Agarwal 42). For example, he speaks of something akin to the ego in the 15th century:

Aisee Vani Boliye, Mun Ka Aapa Khoye
Apna Tan Sheetal Kare, Auran Ko Sukh Hoye.
Speak such words, sans ego's ploy
keep yourself calm, give the listener joy (Translation, mine)

The ego is not a concept available in the 15th century and yet it is that fledgling idea that he was already writing about. As Agarwal has mentioned and I have quoted earlier in the paper, the spirit of modernity had come to the Indian sub-continent as early as the fourteenth century and identity formation was already being discussed. Ironically, however, and the film shows this too, that this aspect of Kabir is not as well known. Desultory audiences may not recall the discussions around self and ego and the space that Kabir has tried to create in between religions and in between rituals and structures. Most importantly, he was trying to use the negative effects of the ego (*apa*) to question the bifurcation of religious ideas. For this reason, there is something ironic about the political powers of the current government setting up academies in Kabir's name while at the same time giving polarizing speeches (Nair). Kabir would have been the most critical of attempts at co-opting him for religious revivalism. His thoughts on religion can be summed up with his sense of humor: "If tonsure were the path to God, how come sheep, sheared so often, don't obtain the abode of Vishnu (Hess)." Kabir's questioning of religion is what makes his work useful for exploring ways of re-thinking identity. This questioning and challenging were a part of the tradition that Kabir had inherited and very likely continued after him. (Agarwal).

Challenging of established orders, simple articulations and the grounded praxis are only some of the reasons for which Kabir needs to be performed and read, and films like *Bounded-Boundless* be understood and appreciated. It is perhaps important to remember, like all saints, Kabir has sectarian followers who have a shrine for him and a holy discourse surrounding him. Known as Kabir panthis, they also claim that Kabir is a Hindu and in doing so, force Kabir into a monolithic mold which his padas, slokas, bijak contradict. As Shabnam Virmani's film helps us understand, Kabir's legacy has many aspects that can lodge him as part of the popular imaginary – the music, the edge in the lyrics, the ability to involve people, the embodiment, the connection with people rather than with policy, and an inclusionary pattern that speaks for Dalits and other marginalized people. In discussing postcolonial cultural interventions, Homi Bhaba writes,

> the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. (*7*)

Kabir's music, it can be argued, does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent, it renews the past refiguring it as a "contingent in between space" (Bhabha 9) that interrupts the performance of the present. The past present becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia of living. Virmani's journey with Kabir is part of this cultural engagement that offers a new space and challenges monolithic and ritual-ridden reconstructions of the past.

In conclusion, Kabir's lyrics themselves keep us grounded—we cannot co-opt his words as celebratory romance, glorification of the past, or even a fetishisation of identities; nor is this a search for a utopian moment, but for disruptions that can interrupt the narrative of nationalism that is current, vitriolic and conciliatory to a majoritarian discourse. Kabir's music and poetry is volatile, alive and performative. They provide identity to people and connect communities without necessarily being divisive and his works are resistant to cooptation by religious bigots. Film makers like Shabnam Virmani have enriched Kabir further by carrying his music across contentious borders and have shown through documentaries and performances that Kabir's music is enriching and subversive at the same time (*Had Anhad*) It addresses caste politics and stays focused on people and communities. Without being populist or incendiary, Kabir's poetics/praxis challenges easy and monochromatic identity formations. Across his lyrics, we see the refusal of easy binaries:

> Watching the grinding stones, it is Kabir who Cries
> Inside the Two Stones, no one survives.

The two grinding stones are also binaries that echoes the stalemate of community relationships in contemporary India. It is important to remember that Kabir too was speaking to a society that was torn asunder by caste hierarchies, religious domination and communal strife. Perhaps that world is not too different from the contemporary rise in religious extremism, killings, and even terrorism in the name of religion. While, governments and international bodies are speaking the language of policy and secularism, stronger laws and tighter restrictions, it is important to build connections amongst people and communities through robust frameworks of identity and cultural representation that Kabir's poetry and music offer.

New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), USA

Notes

[1] S.N. Balgangadhara: *Reconceptualising India Studies.*

[2] *All quotes of Kabir's poems are taken from ajabshahar.com*

[3] *The Kabir project is housed in Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology.*

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Feeling-in-Common/ Being-in-Common as a Possibility of Feeling Alive: Kant with Nancy

MARTA ALEKSANDROWICZ

"We shall say then that being is not common in the sense of a common property, but that it is in common. Being is in common. What could be simpler to establish? And yet, is there anything of which ontology has been more unaware up to now?," writes Jean-Luc Nancy at the beginning of the essay "Of Being-in-Common" [*De l'être-en-commun*] (1986) wherein he calls 'philosophy' and 'community' to in-scribe the 'in' into ipseity that he conceives as being-*in*-common—it is indeed a question of "the community of being" rather than "the being of community" that animates his essay (1). Just like in Immanuel Kant's analysis of the judgment of the beautiful wherein common sense is communal not in that it belongs to community as its common property, being-in-common at the center of Nancy's discussion too does not designate being as common possession or common given that would therefore be a carrier of common meaning; hence perhaps Nancy's insistence on the use of this specific term rather than characterizing being for instance as common being. Just as communality in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment [Kritik der Urteilskraft]* (1790) is constitutive of common sense, the in-common in Nancy's essay is not a predicate or modifier of being but rather its subject.[1]

Nancy's insights on the 'in' constitutive of the in-common as an index of a-telic and non-linear directionality, motion, and orientation *toward* that disrupts the binary logic of the inside/outside, open up, I think, interesting avenues for thinking the self of the aesthetic judgment of the beautiful *vis-à-vis* both itself and other judging subjects as well as *vis-à-vis* common sense as what can be perhaps broached as *feeling of life-in-common*—that is a sense of life not *of* but rather *as* community. Especially pertinent to my interest in this paper is to begin this traversal of the textures of the subject of the judgment of the beautiful in the context of the word *Mitteilbarkeit* that Kant repeatedly uses to discuss the communicability of the feeling of pleasure that is integral to the aesthetic judgment alongside Nancy's recurrent insertion of the verb *partager* to characterize being, or existence. If one is attuned to the meanings of *teilen* that is one of the constituents of *Mitteilbarkeit*, it transpires that the building blocks of *Mitteilbarkeit* point to not only sharing but also constitutive sectioning, dividing, and intersecting between members of the judging community. Interestingly, just like the German *teilen*, French *partager* also simultaneously denotes 'sharing' and 'dividing' and in the English translation of Nancy's essay it is usually rendered as 'to share and to partition' and 'to divide and parcel out'.

In Section 40 of the third *Critique*, Kant writes that it is to a greater degree "taste" [*der Geschmack*] than "common human understanding" [*der gemeine Menschenverstand*], which is a kind [*einer Art*] of *sensus communis*[2], just like it is the aesthetic rather than intellectual power of judgment [*die Urteilskraft*] that deserves "the name of a communal sense [*den Namen eines gemeinschaftlichen Sinnes*]" (173, 175). Sense is articulated as the feeling of pleasure [*das Gefühl der Lust*] that ensues from the "mere[3] [*bloß*] reflection" on the mind

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via a free play [*Spiel*] of the faculties of imagination and understanding (that bring each other into play and into life because synthesis of imagination is here not subordinate to the concepts of understanding) (175). Both foundational and specific to this sense as the feeling of pleasure—which, if one is attuned to the nuances that the word *Lust* carries in German, perhaps should not be considered in severance from its other associated yet by no means equivalent meanings, such as passion, wish, and inclination[4]—is that, at its crux, it is a communal feeling. Kant continues his discussion of taste adding that it is indeed "the faculty for judging that which makes our feeling in a given representation **universally communicable** [*allgemein mitteilbar*] without the mediation of a concept"—the judgment of taste as a distinct kind of *sensus communis* is thus from the outset of the order of mutually constitutive singularity and plurality (175). Communality is not a predicate of common sense, it is its subject. Since the judgment of taste "by which something is declared to be beautiful" does not rely on conceptual mediation, it rests on the presupposition of capability of the feeling of pleasure that arises from the singular judgment of the beautiful by the subject who in the moment of judgment does not cognize and yet is endowed with capacity for cognition to be directly and immediately transmitable and universally share-able with all other subjects who might possibly consent to it in their shared capacity for the reflective judgment from which ensues the feeling of pleasure (176).[5]

Kant's repeated use of German *mitteilen* and *Mitteilbar(keit)* when referring to communicability of this feeling of pleasure deserves zooming in on as it evinces something fundamental about his understanding of the aesthetic power of judgment of taste as communal sense that will play a pivotal role in my discussion. As I mentioned above, while the German verb *mitteilen* certainly translates as 'to communicate', when broken into constituent parts, *mit* + *teilen* denotes 'to share with' but also 'to divide', 'to partition', and 'to intersect'. Interestingly, *Urteilskraft* [the power of judgment] in the German title of Kant's book (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*) also has *teilen* as one of its constituents and can literally be translated as the 'power' [*Kraft*] of 'original, primal' [*Ur-*] 'splitting, partitioning, sharing' [*Teil*]. To simultaneously share with and be divided from the community of subjects capable of cognition is what makes the feeling of pleasure only—or *merely* as Kant recurrently characterizes the universality of aesthetic judgment—shareable and communicable rather than strictly shared and communicated, as the latter would presuppose the facticity of communication that in order to hold on to its teleological premise would require repudiation of this constitutive division implied in *teilen*. Although Kant's understanding of *sensus communis* as an idea, as a horizon of possibility not driven by a linear, progressive orientation towards the actuality of universal communication and consent (that I will turn to in more detail further in my discussion) pertains to the terrain of reflection, it holds a broader radical promise in its invitation to consider common sense to be in essence infinitely communal.

If non-conceptual predisposition to cognition that comes forth in the reflective judgment of the beautiful produces the feeling of pleasure which is possibly in-common in its universal communicability, the judgment itself is too in-common. Although it is singular in not being mediated by the concept and therefore subjects the object to individual judgment—as Kant writes in Section 8, in the absence of the concept "I must hold the object up to my feeling of pleasure and displeasure"—the judgment of taste is in-common because it revolves around the expectation of the feeling of pleasure's shareability that might possibly produce consent in others (100). What does this in-common of the feeling

that ensues in the subject from the judgment of the beautiful and that, from its inception, is driven by the expectation of universal shareability and assent of others, suggest however for thinking the subject of the aesthetic judgment themselves? More specifically, doesn't this infinitely outward orientation that such an aesthetic judgment is predicated on necessarily open the subject themselves, partitioning them within and without, so that they can no longer be conceived of as a complete, bounded, and self-contained being but rather as the infinite porosity and opening not only toward *other* subjects predisposed to cognition but—in a necessary constitutive outwardness and openness of the judging subject—also toward *alterity* that becomes, is, generative of their own self? If sense, as a shareable and universally communicable feeling of pleasure that arises from the aesthetic judgment of taste, is a communal sense, then perhaps the self of this aesthetic judgment is, from the outset, a communal self.

"Existence *is* only in being partitioned and shared [*l'existence n'est qu'à être partagée*]," writes Nancy in his essay not to suggest a partition that dissects existence to distribute "a substance or a common meaning" that is appropriable and shared by all, but rather to highlight that partition is what parcels out [*partage*] being, understood as exposure or exposition [*l'exposition*]—"the declension of self, the faceless trembling of exposed identity: *we* are what it divides and parcels out [*il nous partage*]" (5). The declension of exposed self dwells on a limit where "'soi' is 'on its own,' *other before* any assignment of same and other" (4). Thus, the sense of being as the sense that *is* being-in-common cannot be located in a conformity between being with itself as a self-identical presence (as in Hegelian conceptualization of sense as something that came come to-itself through the movement of re-absorption and re-appropriation of being and its sense as the sense of being in the self), since that would involve concealment of its *expose*d orientation, of its way of being *toward* that Nancy insists on in his use of the 'in-common'—a foundation of being founded on partitions, fissures, and alterity that make us "*in* common, *with* one another" (6). 'In' is not an index of motion toward inside-ness with the result of spatial containment and enclosure within some interior that would be hermetically sealed off from the exteriority of its contours and thus available for common meaning and appropriable by representation; it is rather what shapes the sense of being (who is sensing and embodied) as opening and exposure. 'In' is a "breach" that in spacing and cleaving 'being' and 'common' marks the lack of common being or common identity and instead points toward the self that is generated by partitions that it shares with others (11). It shapes sense by propelling it out- and to-ward. After Nancy writes "we are *in* common, *with* one another," he immediately adds that "with," "together," and "in common" stand for neither "in one another" nor "in each other's place," which would suggest the relationship of beings to one another predicated on fusion (6). This relationship, however, cannot either be characterized as the position of being(s) "juxtaposed" (whose etymology already points to the relation of separation as exteriority: *juxta* 'next' + *poser* 'to place') or "next to" one another [*non plus simplement dire « à côté », ni « juxtaposés »*] as that would imply that there indeed exists a possibility of the "pure outside," which however if that were the case, by virtue of being purely outside, could not possibly distinguish "itself as 'itself'" and therefore inevitably , in Nancy's words, it "merges," with the inside that is likewise never the "pure inside" (6). Being as being-in common *is* precisely this: "the *in* [*le en*]" that at once "divides and joins," that "'partitions and shares' [*qui divise et qui ajointe à la fois, qui partage*], the limit where partitioning and sharing are exposed (…) being is in the 'in,' inside of what has no inside" (8).

Thus, the logic of singularity proposed by Nancy is founded on what cannot be contained within the purity of the inside or the outside—singularity is rather situated on the limit that "pertains to what is between two or several, belonging to all and to none—not belonging to itself either" (6). Singularity is not to be conflated with identity but it is rather "exposure itself, its punctual actuality" that "traces an intersection of limits on which there is exposure" (7). Exposure that dwells on and exposes itself to the limit also precedes identification; in evading the logic of "'face to face'" it is thus the mode of relationality "anterior to entrapment by the stare that captures its prey or takes its hostage" (7).[6] Limit, Nancy seems to be suggesting, is not equivalent to limitation that would point to the dialectical overcoming and the existence of beyond of the limitation; to be exposed, to be-in-common, is rather to be on the irreducible limit where there is simultaneously "both inside and outside, and neither inside nor outside" (7).[7] The logic of being-*in*-common *with* one another that is at once shared and partitioned can be well encapsulated by "the banal phenomenology of unorganized groups of people" that Nancy illustrates in the following passage (7):

> Passengers in the same train compartment are simply seated next to each other in an accidental, arbitrary, and completely exterior manner. They are not linked. But they are also quite together inasmuch as they are travelers on this train, in this same space and for this same period of time (…) between the disintegration [*la désagrégation*] of the "crowd" and the aggregation [*l'agrégation*] of the group, both extremes remaining possible, virtual, and near at every moment. This suspension is what makes "being-with": a relation without relation, or rather, being exposed simultaneously to relationship and to the absence of relationship. (7)

To be with one another is to be suspended in a spatial-temporal realm of the in-between aggregation and disaggregation wherein both possibilities coexist. Togetherness is woven where being is exposed to both presence and absence of relation of the self toward itself and toward other singular beings—being and community divide and share one another, denying each other "its-self-evidence" (8). What does it suggest for thinking communication *vis-à-vis* being-in-common?: that communication too must necessarily be exposed to the absence of "commonality" understood as actuality of common measurement that would underlie communication (8). Importantly, being-in-common as exposure is not simply a matter of enunciation since its urgency is not "of a physical law, and whoever wants to expose it must also expose himself" to, in, and as "thought" and "writing" (9).

The logic of inside-outside that underlies being-in-common as in-between the several that at once belongs to all and to none (not even to any *ipse*) in its suspension between aggregation of the group and disintegration of the crowd might help to think the situatedness of the subject of the judgment of taste[8] *vis-à-vis* themselves and other (judging) subjects. *Sensus communis* as the *mere* possibility of *feeling-in-common*, i.e., the essential possibility of universal communicability of the subjective feeling of pleasure that ensues in the subject not from cognition and from the object *per se* but rather from the representation of the object[9] (that relates wholly to the subject), rests on the outward orientation of this subject. This outwardness exposes the subject toward the alterity of other subjects of the judgment of the beautiful but, in this very opening, also perhaps toward its own embeddedness in alterity that founds the judging self as an already communal self rather than a self-identical and self-closing identity (closure which as we had seen in Nancy's discussion of sense cannot be found in a coincidence between being

and itself because that would require the evisceration of being's constitutive exposure). Just as Nancy argues that being-*in*-common *with* one another involves being as a radical opening and sharing of its constitutive partitions, thus implying neither being 'next to' [*à côté*] one another (which in my reading would suggest the relation founded on a clearly-demarcated boundedness of being) nor fusion (which would suggest the relation predicated on the empathetic possibility of being 'in one another' or 'in each other's place'), the mode of relation between the subjects of the judgment of taste too cannot be characterized in terms of either juxtaposition or empathy. Already the etymology of empathy, *em* 'in' + *pathos* 'feeling,' points to a possibility of the mode of relation based on identification and actuality of sharing the feeling of another. In Section 40 of the third *Critique*, before a brief digression on the maxims of the common human understanding[10] the second of which, i.e., "to think in the position of everyone else," is the maxim of "a broad-minded [*erweiterter*] way of thinking [*Denkungsart*]" that might pertain to the power of judgment, Kant makes it clear that *sensus communis* as the "idea of a **communal** sense" is not founded on empathy but rather on "one holding his judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgments of others" (173,174). This idea as "a faculty of judging (…) takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else's way of representing in thought" and taste, as a specific kind of *sensus communis*, is "the faculty for judging *a priori* the communicability of the feelings that are combined with a given representation" that does not involve conceptual mediation (173,176). In *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (1990), Rudolf Makkreel interestingly points out that the *erweiterter Denkungsart* (of the second maxim mentioned above), which is "the one most relevant to the communal sense", also translates into English as "enlarged thought" (159). Enlargement that might be at stake in *sensus communis* does not however involve an empathetic operation of projection of oneself onto another, which might us help think the self and the other in a moment of the judgment of taste. Makkreel notes:

> Enlargement does not call for us to transpose ourselves into the actual standpoint of someone else. The understanding of the other is dependent on a prior enlargement of one's own thought based on imagining possibilities that are not merely variations of the self. (…) we are to project a possible intermediary position held neither by the self nor by the other. This provides the perspective, based on the *sensus communis*, that makes possible a better understanding of both the self and the other. (160)

Just as Nancy invites us to think singularity of/as being-in-common not in terms of identity but rather as exposure and dwelling on the irreducible limit pertaining to the in-between "two or several, (…) all and (…) none," the self and the other(s) of the judgment of the beautiful are held together in a possibility of the intermediary position that is not proper to either of them, where the other cannot be conceived as the product of projection of one's *ipse* (6). Comparing one's judgment with the judgment of others that rests on a common predisposition to cognition as the *feeling-in-common* of pleasure to be universally communic*able* is not in the realm of a concept and actuality but of a mere possibility (and this possibility as an idea perhaps too constitutes a certain limit that is at once generative of it). The mere possibility of *Mitteilbarkeit* thus constitutes a point of intersection, sharing, and division of subjects of the judgment of taste with and from one another. After all, as Kant writes in Section 22 of the third *Critique*, "common sense (…) does not say that everyone **will** concur with our judgment but that everyone **should** agree with it" (123). Although as I had mentioned before, by virtue of not being rooted in a concept, the reflective judgment of taste is always singular, one cannot be persuaded to judge

something as beautiful in the absence of an objective ground—the judgment's claim to universality, as Kant notes in Section 8, "extends it over the whole sphere of those who judge" and has "**common validity**" not with regard to "the relation of a representation to the faculty of cognition but rather to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure" (100). On the following page, Kant goes on to add something about universal assent as an idea that stitches together community between all judging subjects that I consider a crucial encapsulation of what is at stake in the moment of the judgment of the beautiful: "The judgment of taste does not itself **postulate** the accord of everyone (…); it only **ascribes** this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule with regard to which it expects confirmation not from concepts but only from the consent of others" (101). Postulation of the accord would suggest the assumption of its actuality; universal agreement however is rather of the order of ascription since the judgment of taste finds its confirmation in consent to always arrive from others in the infinite process—"the universal voice is thus only an idea" (101). As such, this communal sense as an idea is founded on the mere possibility of return, exchange, and reciprocity that cannot be conceptually validated and actualized and yet it is precisely this infinite horizon of shareability that acts as the motor that puts in motion the judgment of taste.

The promise inscribed in aesthetic reflective judgment is the feeling-in-common of pleasure, that is the feeling of life. Already in Section 1 of the "Analytic of the Beautiful," Kant remarks that grasping "a regular, purposive structure" that is at stake in a cognitive judgment is very different from consciousness of "representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life [*das Lebensgefühl*] under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure" (89-90).[11] The possibility of the *feeling of pleasure-in-common* is the possibility of *feeling of life-in-common.* Common sense is not communal in its distribution among individual members of community as their property or substance; it is communal in that it hinges on the communicability of the feeling of *Lust* [pleasure] as a communal sense of life and as what makes community alive. Sense is a *feeling-in-common* (inscribed in the possibility of and *inclination* to cognition) not *of* but rather *as* what founds community and it is always in circulation as an infinite process with no appropriable, objective, and conceptual ground —it binds in its infinite shareability while also irreducibly dividing the (judging) subject from the community of (judging) subjects in that it is not "apodictic" and "a merely ideal norm," its presence therefore not subject to conceptual, objective verification and evidence (120, 123). That pleasure is closely intertwined with *inclination* is already hinted at in the German *Lust*, which translates as pleasure, inclination, wish, passion, longing etc. Perhaps it can be argued that subjects of the judgment of the beautiful indeed are bound together in this possibility of feeling-in-common by a kind of *pleasure principle* understood as *inclination* to cognition that *wishes* to be a-conceptually communicable. This inclination to make a judgement of the beautiful, which is to feel pleasure and to feel, and therefore perhaps be, alive, is already inscribed in *Lust*, along with the essential wish for this feeling to be in-common. *Lust* as feeling and inclination moves and propels (judging) subjects towards the horizon of *sensus communis* as an idea of communal sense which is not common, but rather in-common. And this is perhaps what makes (the judgment of) taste a special *kind of sensus communis.*

SUNY Buffalo, New York, USA

Notes

[1] Nancy's discussion of the in-common of existence orbits around and draws from Heideggerian *Dasein* as essentially constituted, rather than modified or qualified, by the *mit* [with] of Mitsein, but it will not be the focus of this paper.

[2] In order to differentiate between *sensus communis* that characterizes the common human understanding which is "vulgar" [Latin *vulgare*], i.e., "the least that can be expected from anyone who lays claim to the name of a human being (…) encountered everywhere, to possess which is certainly not an advantage or an honor" and *sensus communis* as taste, Kant notes that: "One could designate taste as *sensus communis aestheticus*, common human understanding as *sensus communis logicus*" (173, 175).

[3] *Bloß* is frequently used by Kant to refer to the judgment of the beautiful and if I had more time, I would discuss its nuanced meanings and possible implications for Kant's project, especially for thinking the self of this aesthetic judgment *vis-à-vis* both itself as well as other subjects of a pure judgment of taste. In *The Idea of Form* (2003), Rodolphe Gasché notes that the power of *mere* reflective judgment lies in shedding "light on an affective dimension of cognition in a broad sense (…) it illuminates what thinking feels when it thinks" (26). In his exploration of complex etymologies and meanings carried by *bloß*, Gasché writes that merely reflective judgment, unlike determining judgment which "subsumes the particular under given concepts", is more autonomous in its search for "laws for the particular" in the absence of concepts—"the merely reflective nature of reflection (…) can shine forth in all its nakedness only when the latter [determining judgment] reached its limits" (23,22).

[4] At the end of my discussion I will briefly consider what avenues of thinking about *sensus communis* these meanings might open up.

[5] In Section 22 on the universal assent that is an index of objectivity "under the presupposition of a common sense," Kant writes: "In all judgments by which we declare something to be beautiful, we allow no one to be of a different opinion, without, however, grounding our judgment on concepts, but only on our feeling, which we therefore make our ground not as a private feeling, but as a common one" (123).

[6] It is possible that here Nancy is alluding to Emmanuel Levinas to whom he refers to earlier in the essay in his discussion of *soi* as neither Hegelian "'*soi*' of self-consciousness needing to be recognized in order to recognize *itself*" nor as Levinasian *soi* that is merely "hostage to others" (4).

[7] In "Finite Thinking," Nancy writes: "Not a thinking of limitation, which implies the unlimitedness of a beyond, but a thinking of the limit as that on which, infinitely finite, existence arises, and to which it is exposed" (27). For more, see: Nancy, Jean-Luc. "A Finite Thinking." In *A Finite Thinking*. Translated by Edward Bullard, Jonathan Derbyshire, and Simon Sparks, 3-30. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

[8] It would be interesting to further think the subject of the beautiful alongside psychoanalysis, especially in the context of beauty as constitutive of the subject's singularity that is in excess of biology as well as social and cultural norms, ideals, and values. For more, please see the work of Willy Apollon, Lucie Cantin, and Danielle Bergeron from the Freudian School of Quebec (GIFRIC).

[9] At the beginning of the Section 1 of the "Analytic of the Beautiful," Kant writes: "To grasp a regular, purposive structure with one's faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject" (89-90). In Section 2, he goes on to say that unlike in the case of the good and the agreeable that are combined with interest, the judgment of taste is marked by "the pure disinterested satisfaction" (91): "One only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me, however indifferent I might be with regard to the existence of the object

of this representation. It is readily seen that to say that it is **beautiful** and to prove that I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object. (…) One must not be in the least biased in favor of the existence of the thing, but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste" (90-91).

[10] The maxims of the common human understanding that are the subject of Kant's digression cannot be considered "parts of the critique of taste," but he notes that they can nonetheless illuminate "its fundamental principles" (174).

[11] Also in other places, for example at the beginning of the "Analytic of the Sublime," where Kant transitions in his discussion from the judgment of the beautiful to the judgment of the sublime, he notes that pleasure of the judgment of the beautiful "directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life [*Die Beförderung des Lebens*]" (128). Makkreel remarks that *Lebensgefühl*, "like aesthetic feeling in general, is not reducible to a private state with a particular psychological content; it is formal in nature and in principle universally communicable. Nor is the term 'life' limited to its biological meaning; it is used more broadly to convey a sense of vitality that also encompasses our mental life" (88). Pleasure, he adds, "is defined by Kant as the feeling of the furtherance of our life and displeasure as the feeling of the restriction of our life" and "aesthetic pleasure heightens life: heightens the sense of my existence, furthers my feeling of being alive (…). While the disinterestedness of aesthetic pleasure involves an indifference to the existence of the object judged, it does not require me, the judging subject, to be indifferent to my own existence" (91, 92).

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Existentialist's Traits in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*: An Ontological Inquiry

PRASHANT KUMAR and RAJNEE DEVI

The paper aims at seeking existentialist's traits in the lead character of Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha by explicating the fundamental tenets of existentialism. Indubitably, Hesse's portrayal of Siddhartha is highly influenced by Buddhist philosophy, therefore the paper will take a recourse to some concepts of Buddhist philosophy to establish the existentialist's traits in Siddhartha. However, the paper does neither claim of any influence of existentialism on Hermann Hesse nor it establishes any impact of Buddhism on existentialism.

The socio-cultural upbringing of beings puts burden on them with multiple meanings of the world which they struggle throughout their entire life. The movement of existentialism questions the existence of human beings in terms of 'bad faith'[1] and 'authenticity'; denying the pre-given knowledge of objects and accepting every object as a new object of inquiry without any meaning being attached to them. With respect to this, existentialism accepts human facticity and denies modernistic and scientific methods where "self" does not appear as an active subject. Despite being at the center, the self recognizes the world as a historically pre-given truth. The central point is to emphasize on the human subject which, like Heidegger, does not refer to acquire the meaning of worldly objects as what is given to be. Rather, it creates meaning while engaging with experiential world that is required to lead an authentic life.

The Buddhist view on objects, as Siddhartha presents in Hermann Hesse's novel, that every object change at each moment entails that the nature of the objects is not fixed. Thus, the possibility to know about them in entirety is far from our reach. The unknown object cannot be the object of desire for any human being as to become an object of desire, it must present in human cognizance. The *knowledge of undesirable objects* depends upon the better understanding of the objects that helps us to escape from the deadly circle of birth and death. The human beings do not hold some fixed set of properties, as Heidegger maintains. Unlike objects, beings have the set of possibilities through which one can overcome the 'bad faith'. Thus, the self can be discerned differently in each episode of life.

However, the problem arises – is Siddhartha as the ascetic wanderer in the first episode of life, different from the Siddharth who is a wealthy man, enjoying all the pleasures of beautiful world in the second episode? Can such beings live in episodes? As Galen Strawson argues, in "Against Narrativity" that the past can be present, in the present itself and it does not remain in the self as past. Similarly, in future, there lies the possibility of a self which itself cannot be realised in present. However, the imagination of these possibilities can sincerely shape the one's present; to aquire the imagined future, one needs to act in a particular way. So, every moment of episodic self is both aware of past as well as future. Therefore, there is a possibility for the enquirer to achieve liberation by living in moments/ episodes which in itself is the whole. Does Siddhartha explore such possibility?

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Keeping all these significant points, the paper, firstly, shows how Siddhartha lives an authentic life by taking a sojourn to discern the world. However, it does not suggest that to lead an authentic life taking a sojourn is a necessary condition. Siddhartha realized that he is not isolated from the world[2] rather he is the one existing in the world along with other beings. The paper also sheds light on living an authentic life with others. Secondly, it will explicate the very first condition to embark in such a sojourn. The condition where objects in the world at the first sight appear "absurd". This is also a stage of breaking peace with both, life and mind, and reinvestigating the world becomes a necessity for such beings. Conclusively, the paper argues Siddhartha is such a being.

In order to achieve the objectives of the paper, it deals with the different concepts of existentialisms and Buddhism to place the character of Siddhartha better in the theoretical complexities of existentialist's tradition. In order to do this, a brief analysis of the notion of object is presented where both the traditions decry the deterministic character of objects. Understanding the fundamental reality may cause a distress in the mind of an inquirer to look for something real – something that explains the complexities of reality. Siddhartha is no exception in this sense and feels the same agony about the world and decides to take a sojourn by himself to understand the reality.

Secondly, suffering emerges from such situation of disappointments. Buddhism states that in the most fundamental level, all human beings are born with suffering. However, most of the times, they are not aware because of their ignorance. Though existentialists do not use 'suffering', but their acceptance of pain, mental agony, psychological distress, existential crisis, sense of void and hollowness establishes the ground for suffering. The basic tenets of both the traditions prepare ground for Hesse's *Siddhartha* to lead an authentic life. However, it leaves us with certain important questions for us to inquire – What makes Siddhartha to fed up with the earlier understanding of the world, which eventually lead him to take up the sojourn to understand the world? What was going on in his head when he explains the absurdity of the world to his friend? Was the suffering or agony unbearable to Siddhartha, and satisfying queries was the last resort to lessen suffering? Did he find the truest 'self' which he is looking for? With reference to such questions, the paper further evaluates the significance of object and subject and puts Siddhartha in an inquiry full of existentialist's traits.

Understanding the Shattering Concepts of World

The intelligibility of the world in any human being lies in the meaning of the concepts of the world. Meaning(s) of any object itself guides us to understand the reality of the object. But, how does an object acquire the meaning(s)? The whole tussle between the object to have a meaning and the *meaning* to associate with the objects are resolved by human subjects, as it is the humans who give meaning to the objects based on the use and benefits of the objects. However, what if, human subject himself has lost his sense of intelligibility – to determine himself, to discern his own major characteristics, and struggles even to find slightest clue for the meaning. Agitation of not seeing the *object* as object but fleeting random atoms striving to become a meaningful object, drives human subjects to find the hidden secrets of the unintelligible world. This agitation makes a reflective subject to suspect his illustrious father, his educated and liberated teachers and others who are considered as *nirvāṇa-attained* persons[3]. Before the mind can cast any doubt, the mental status of the situation where things appear stranger becomes the most radical and crucial *state*. It is the state when human beings turn the gaze towards themselves

and feel their existence. This existent situation where they face and encounter more transparent, simple and bare objects constantly reminds them the crisis of their existence.

In this particular situation of absurdity, which the existentialists call the most revolutionary state, human subjects struggle and negotiate not only with their own existence, but with the prior existent void and meaningless object. The negotiation is not only for an authentic being but also for the common human beings who has the potentiality to actualize the possibilities. Such a being not only strive to make an intelligible world out of unintelligible reality, but also shatters the slightest pre-given concepts. This is not an effort to prove the existence of the subject but it is an existential effort to scramble the underpinnings and at the same time, making his own intelligible world – a world from the first-person perspective. Thus, Siddhartha believes that he has gained all the knowledge that a teacher teaches and no more teaching can help him to look beyond. This is something he needs to find by himself. As he states,

> "I no longer want to kill and dissect myself just to find a secret behind the ruins. Neither Yoga-Veda shall teach me anymore, no Atharva-Veda, nor the ascetics, nor any kind of teachings. I want to learn from myself, want to be my student, and want to get to know myself, the secret of Siddhartha"[4].

The protagonist of the novel believes that one cannot teach one's experiences. Knowledge attained through experiences seems difficult to frame in words. Such first-person experiential thoughts become difficult for Siddhartha to convey in the similar way as one has experienced. However, in the later part of the novel when Siddhartha himself has become aware of such thoughts, Siddhartha explains it in a conversation with Govinda.

> "I've had thoughts, yes, and insight, again and again. Sometimes, for an hour or for an entire day, I have felt knowledge in me, as one would feel life in one's heart. There have been many thoughts, but it would be hard for me to convey them to you. Look, my dear Govinda, this is one of my thoughts, which I have found: wisdom cannot be passed on. Wisdom which a wise man tries to pass on to someone always sounds like foolishness."[5]

Therefore, teachings are good to form a conglomerate which follows a set of rules, to develop a listening skill, to gain knowledge of whatever is expressed by a teacher through words. But wisdom, to which Siddhartha is looking for, is to be attained only by one's experience; when one puts himself in the place of finding something instead of seeking. Such experience may help one to turn towards the inner self, the authentic one.

Eternal Recurrence: Birth-Death Spiral

Would it be ironic not to consider human being as finite and time as finite? The association of these two facts entails a possibility where beings, objects and other species find their selves in the same position again and again. The implicit circularity running in each of our lives will push you to re-arrive in a same position. The clear clue one finds in the novel regarding this when Siddhartha meets the ferryman, he says "this too, I have learned from the river: everything is coming back! You too, Samana, will come back."[6] Nietzsche also finds this idea in his reading of Heinrich Heine.

> For time is infinite, but the things in time, the concrete bodies are finite. Now, however long a time may pass, according to eternal laws governing the combination of the eternal play of repetition, all configuration that have previously existed on the earth must yet meet, attract, repulse, kiss and corrupt each other again…. And thus, it will happen one day that man will be born again, like me, and a woman will be born, just like Mary.[7]

Further, it is the human beings who not only give meaning to objects, but they also assign meaning to the beginningless and endless time by dividing it into past, present and future. Thus, the past repeats itself in the form of future and it goes on to infinity. The excerpt does not only show the deep agitation for re-living the same things, but also to live it without any purpose and true meaning. Nietzsche further writes in his book titled as *The Will to Power*, "Duration 'in vain' without end or aim is the most paralyzing idea"[8]. The endless struggle to live and experience things constantly has also been delineated well by Albert Camus in his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. A man who is bound to roll a stone up by the top of the mountain and is destined to fail – each time he thinks he is about to succeed the stone falls back to the ground. The man has no other choice but to restart it again. The existentialist defines this situation as inescapable which is an integral part of human existence. In the next few pages, Nietzsche explains it again,

> What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you to into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "this life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and every unutterably small or great in your life will have return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, even this moment and myself. The eternal; hourglass of existence is turned upside and down again and again, and you with it speck of dust, would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth or curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "you are a God and I have never heard anything more divine"? If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are, or perhaps crush you[9].

To explore the possibilities of bringing joy and happiness through the inescapable conundrums of life are the central objectives of the existentialists. Although they do not deny the possibilities of the opposite, but despite these possibilities, human beings must conquer this psychological burden through art and the revaluation(s) of values. However, does the situation of things in the world have any analogical effects on human subjects, i.e. to sense the complicated circle of birth-death? Does it not show that the human beings, too, are stuck in the spiral nature of Birth and Death?

Straightforwardly the answer comes to the question – 'Yes'. The possibility of re-experiencing the same events entails the possibility of the same phenomenon for consciousness as well. With the common understanding of the temporal succession, the human consciousness must have to come back in the world, after running through a whole circle. The assumption is based on Birth-Death spiral. The search of Siddhartha in Hesse's explicates the Buddhist's notion of *bhāvacakra*. Their twelve links of causal wheel explain a dark and an inescapable web where Siddhartha is stuck and finds no exit. Another interpretation made by C. D. Sharma points out a different understanding. He writes, "it does not end with the death, but death is only a beginning of a new life[10]". This is also known as *saṁsāracakra.*

Siddhartha constantly engages with the intricacies of worldly life and his portrayal in the novel by Hesse points him as a constant negator of the world – looking beyond to what is given. Siddhartha never finds satisfaction with the given meanings of the worldly objects and the death of the given meaning, for him, would be a new beginning for a fresh inquiry. Therefore, he leaves behind everything, even the closest and honorable, in search of true meaning by keeping himself at the center. Initially, he isolated himself from the world by calling it 'absurd'. However, after meeting Buddha, he ponders that

the teachings of the world and *nirvāṇa* provided by the exalted one is not something what he is looking for. He ponders much on such issues and figures out that the true self is the ultimate end which he is striving for. Considering attachment is the root cause of suffering, he emphasizes much on finding rather than seeking by existing along with others in this world. These others are appeared so unreal to Siddhartha for a longer period of time. Hesse further places Siddhartha to say,

> "When someone seeks," said Siddhartha, "then it easily happens that his eyes see only the thing that he seeks, and he is able to find nothing, to take in nothing because he always thinks only about the thing he is seeking, because he has one goal, because he is obsessed with his goal. Seeking means: having a goal. But finding means being free, being open, having no goal."[11]

How can one have taught such a finding? One needs to find it by their own because of its inexpressibleness. Even if one tries, such finding will turn into a desire along with others which one seeks. Thus, it is important that we all entice to 'finding' rather than 'seeking'.

This shows Siddhartha's understanding of the objects which truly have no implicit meaning and assigning a new meaning becomes a primary aim for him to achieve. The world stands nothing for him as existentialists like Sartre imagines. Sartre argues that consciousness is nothingness; not a thing. He explains consciousness in terms of consciousness of something. It is through the consciousness that the world appears as nothing. Thus, it is one's sole responsibility to act like an authentic being to exist and live the life to the fullest. Sartre, further, argues that "existentialism is nothing else but an attempt to draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position"[12]. The reason to follow a path of atheism is that the concept of God is contradictory for him as it merges the being-in-itself and being-for-itself, which ultimately leads to an inauthentic life. In the same line, Siddhartha, too choose to drop all the suggestions and inquire from the scratch without even a slightest assistance from others. Although, Siddhartha's way of overcoming the complicated situations is a bit different in terms of escaping it or negotiating with. However, through these underpinnings, Siddhartha's beginning point as inquirer or being in a sojourn of an inquest to know the human existence brings him close to the basic foundations of existentialism.

Suffering: 'In the Womb of Existence'

Tragic situations of human existence since its beginning always lie in between the awareness of void world in general and hollow objects in particular. Existence of human beings in between these situations struggles to reach on a better understanding of the world. The whole struggle to justify or to know this meaningless world shows the collective fight against the suffering. The very first moment when a human being is born, this *struggle* is labeled to her to fight against suffering throughout her whole life. The existentialist philosophers accept this suffering in its basic level attached to the very existence of human beings. Her existence itself is a potential seed of suffering. Witness this through these lines,

> ". . . what was the best and most desirable thing of all for humankind. . . [the] best of all things is something entirely outside your grasp: not to born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second-thing for you- is to die soon[13].

Compliment Hesse's imagination of Siddhartha by placing him in a technological advanced world. Imagine he is stuck in the deep and dense forest and could not know,

despite the technological assets, how to come out of the intricated forest. If, for one moment, he also forgets that he is even lost in the forest and does not know how to use the ready-to-hand things, how miserable it would be for him? Every moment in the deep hollow thoroughfare of forests, he senses endlessness: an open possibility towards nothingness. Every step to stroll over these ways would be nothing but a waste of energy. The agitation of struggling with existent environment in meaningless forest is a suffering that Siddhartha pleasantly venture to. This agitation, if based on shattered concepts of objects, Siddhartha ponders, exists in the womb of the existence of human beings.

There are the moments in the book when Siddhartha recalls Buddha's wise words. Buddha himself sees the suffering with its primal root in the human conditions. That is explicitly stated in Buddhist motto, *sarvam duḥkha.* He argues that human life is full of misery and pain. Even if a human being somehow gets happiness by the means of creating *his* own meanings of the world, it would always be subject for consideration of losing it at some other time. Indirectly, it would lead us towards another level of sufferings. Every moment towards the miserable journey of our aimless life is nothing but a heavy step towards the inescapable circle of suffering. So, Siddhartha thinks, suffering is a common experience in human existence which exists in the very first moment of the entrance into this world.

Despite the actions and solutions given to overcome sufferings and negotiating with this world in *Siddhartha* are different in a sense than existentialists' solutions. But Siddhartha's first encounter with the human existence places him as an existentialist; giving up everything to embark in a new journey by himself only. When he first encounters his existence, he develops a feeling of alienation. The agitation to know oneself deepens in him. Siddhartha ponders,

> "Truly, nothing in this world has kept my thoughts thus busy, as this my very own self, this mystery of me being alive, of me being one and being separated and isolated from all others, of me being Siddhartha! And there is nothing in this world I know less about than about me, about Siddhartha."[14]

He further writes, "That I know nothing about myself, that Siddhartha has remained thus alien and unknown to me, stems from one cause, a single cause: I was afraid of myself. I was fleeing from myself."[15] He feels the same agitation, same mental states and human psyche when he deals with a meaningless situation. Although another interpretation[16] of Siddhartha's journey to overcome the suffering presents the similar approaches to the solutions given by Existentialism. However, for the time being, even if we take the narrow interpretation of *Siddhartha*, it comes very close with existentialists in terms of acceptance of suffering with the existence of human beings.

Significance of Object

The last section dealing with suffering shows that how objects seem very significant to discern the miserable life of human beings. Objects always are in the center of any enquiry. To know the objects in its entirety is the sole task of every inquirer. The knowledge of the objects can be possible only by engaging with it directly and earnestly. If a person somehow is unable to recognize the reality, he receives suffering. Siddhartha delineates the non-sincerity in the following lines:

> "A long time ago, oh venerable one, many years ago, you have once before been at this river and have found a sleeping man by the river and sat down with him to guard his sleep. But, oh Govinda, you did not recognize the sleeping man.

> Astonished, as if he had been the object of a magic spell. The monk looked into the ferryman's eyes"[17]

Existentialism tries to show that the meaning or the concepts attached to the objects must be looked with a skeptic eye. One should reject them in the beginning of one's enquiry. As in the novel, the journey of Siddhartha starts with negating everything he engaged with. When this world becomes meaningless, every step towards making it meaningful will be subject's own effort – the first step towards an authentic life. The direct engagement of the subject with the object gives meaning to the objects that would be a result of the complete understanding of the subject. Although the subject of the inquiry is at the center here and always assigns meaning to the objects, however, the object cannot be left aside. For, it is *the object* through which the subject was provoked to know about it. Object too, is significant as it presents itself in a very precise and straightforward manner, but at the same time it hides something deep that provokes human subjects to go beyond what is explicit.

Siddhartha invokes another notion of Buddhism that states the inquirer engages with the objects in the form of appearances. However, the reality is not what it looks like, but is hidden in the appearances. The characters of the objects are to change in the very other moment. In this case, too the closer analysis of any objects describes the ontological status of the world in terms of flux – the reality is always in a process. Subject must inquire what is given and must go beyond this. He should not take the appearances of objects in its finality but should always strive to move beyond the appearances to discern the real nature of the world.

This discussion demonstrates that the subject plays an important role. However, subject is always conscious of an object. Thus, the object cannot be taken out from the inquiry. In the novel, *Siddhartha*, Hesse gives importance to the subject who will give/determine the meaning of object through his own enquiry.

Beyond the Appearances of the Objects: "An Interpretation of Momentariness"

Siddhartha through his existential experiences finds the consensus with Heraclitus notion of flux, that is, "every object changes in *temporal* succession". Temporal succession explains the changes in objects in each moment. The particular attributes and qualities of objects, as Buddha calls it *svalakṣaṇa* (changing every moment). For instance, a particular object A has certain properties in time T. A reflective being finds different characteristics, changed and merged with other properties, by his own certain experiences and evaluates A as different in another moment t'. The properties in an object A in T and the properties of A in t' are not same because of its assimilation in other properties. So, can one say that the *same* object has the same identity at different times? A at t', is still identical with A at T? The paper argues "no", they are not the same. The means to determine the object are through their properties. Now, imagine this same condition with t^n times. The object loses its identity in its disguise form of appearances. Its own essence, the basic traits and properties have been changed through which a subject can ever know about the object. For, the time is not finite and being present in time, these objects exist in their appearances prior to our existence with its changing nature. Therefore, they cannot be defined completely. They always remain a mystery in its own appearances. Granting that the world is full of objects placed in a certain spatial form but in its changing nature. The world is still full of beautiful roses and stones, which I feel hesitated to say the same rose

and stone at another point. However, the notion behind the appearances of stone and roses are not the same. They are just a part of aesthetic entertainment. In the scramble and shatter world of experience, a human subject finds himself to solve the puzzle of his life by devising his own world of notions, tenets and concepts. To explicate this, Siddhartha says in the conversation with Buddha,

> "It has come to you in the course of your own search, on your own path, through thoughts, through meditation, through realization, through enlightenment."[18]

The venerability in this kind of effort leads a man to find his own meaning. The endeavour to go beyond what is given to you, your facticity, to create new meanings shows the first fundamental criteria through which any human subject must be defined. However, the same condition in which a Buddha's follower was found where he feels everything is meaningless, is defined by the existentialist as a state of "absurdity"[19]. In its literary guise, the absurdity is tied to an experience of radical contingency in which the *world*, us, and the universe as a whole reveal themselves as lacking intrinsic meaning or purpose.[20] The portrayal of Siddhartha, here too, shares intrinsic constituents of existentialism. Sense the absurdity of the reality in the following passage

> "I have had to experience so much stupidity, so many vices, so much error, so much nausea, disillusionment and sorrow, just in order to become a child again and again and begin anew. I had to experience despair, I had to sink to the greatest mental depths, to thoughts of suicide, in order to experience grace."[21]

The Notion of 'Being': The "I" in its Possibilities

The volatile understanding of 'Being' is the consequence of Heidegger's inquiry of "how I am". An inquiry of 'what I am' tries to give a static answer or more concretely, gives a static ontological answer which treats human beings mere as objects. To avoid such enquiry and focusing more on Heideggerian notion of Being, Siddhartha primarily focuses on the understanding where human beings is not only what he is 'already-in' but what he is not. Sartre also argues in his essay "Existentialism is a Humanism" that "man is nothing else but what he makes out of himself"[22]. This implies that human beings cannot be captivated in spatio-temporal framework. They are themselves decider of what they will be through the determination of their will[23]. Siddhartha's portrayal in the novel depicts exactly what existentialists proposes.

Siddhartha also reaches to the conclusion through his inquiry that consciousness is volatile in nature. As the objects outside in the world are just a mere unification of some attributes in a particular moment and is subject to change in the next moment. Similarly, this consciousness too, is subject to change in the next moment. It would be an injustice to take an account of it in terms of her association of attributes, modes and qualities in its earlier moments. Her essence is not prior to her existence in the sense that it is always subjected to change. It has already been delineated that whatever is subject to change in terms of his attributes and qualities, cannot be entirely defined in its true sense. Therefore, its essence cannot be captivated in words of experience. It will always be what it is not yet. Hence, consciousness is not mere a recognition of what was it and what it is, but what it can/will be. Siddhartha when become aware of the truest self by reflecting on himself, he tells his friend, Govinda,

> "The opposite of every truth is just as true. That's like this: any truth can only be expressed and put into words when it is one-sided. Everything is one sided which can be thought

> with thoughts and said with words, it's all one sided, all just one half, all lacks completeness, roundness, oneness."[24]

Whatever truth is known through words about the world is not complete. The whole which is undivided cannot be framed in words and Siddhartha believes that 'the world itself, that exists around us and inside of us, is never one-sided.' The *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa* together makes the whole. Although they both appear as different, but, as we have already seen, the reality lies behind the appearances. It is like Sartre's paradox of human existence when he says that "I-am-not-what-I-am and I-am-what-I-am-not".[25] So, everything which is out there in the world contains everything in terms of possibilities. Existentialists believe that the human subject is the center of their lived world just like Siddhartha is portrayed in the center of his world in the novel.

In this sense, Siddhartha's understanding of consciousness and Heidegger's concept of 'Being' come closer. They work like the artists who have same potentiality to experience the phenomena but takes different paths to express it. Both choose to define it in more pragmatic manner from their perspectives and open possibilities to start a subjective journey – a journey towards an authentic or liberated life in which the descriptions will be dependent upon the possibilities to explore.

These explanations, ultimately, tries to answer to overcome the inescapable suffering in which human subject is caught like a spider in his own web. He puts efforts to come out and in trying so makes a new trap for himself. On the one hand, to know the *depending* characters of objects is more than enough to unveil the illusion from the mind. On the other, to live with these void and meaningless objects and to make his own meaningful world, Siddhartha led an authentic life. As Heidegger delineates the death is the point where you can be fully defined as an authentic or unauthentic, it becomes so much important for Buddha because through this, this circle of birth-death can be ended. Although Buddha consider twelve causes of this *cakra* that is mainly based on ignorance. Objects are ever-changing and the knowledge of this reality will lead human beings towards its liberation. Existentialism would say that to give meaning to the objects by oneself and to live with those meanings will lead you to authentic life.

This whole examination of life in both schools starts with an unfortunate but a brute fact of 'suffering' where both accept its attachment to the very existence of human beings. Siddhartha primarily feels the seeds of suffering in his existence. He sees the objects of the world without essence, and they are just fleeting in the air without any meaning. Siddhartha tries to make sense of this strange fact of meaningless objects and by creating meanings, he leads an authentic life.

Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Notes

[1] This term is defined by Sartre, in his book *Being and Nothingness*. It refers to identify oneself based on the actions or profession that one performs, as the result of circumstances and deceives oneself by hiding the truth of having possibilities

[2] Here, 'world' does not refer to just the objective world, it also focusses on the relational world, the factual world, in which a being is connected with the people and the unchangeable facts with which one is born.

[3] Siddhartha, the protagonist of the novel *Siddhartha*, senses the same feeling when he found the world unintelligible. This same kind of questioning is found in the first section entitles as "The Son of the *Brahmin"*. p. 16
[4] Hesse, Hermann. *Siddhartha*, p. 24
[5] Ibid, p. 80
[6] Ibid, p. 28
[7] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay science*, p. 16
[8] Nietzsche. *The will to power*, p. 55
[9] Ibid., p. 341
[10] Sharma, C.D., *A Critical survey of Indian Philosophy*, p. 74
[11] Hesse, Hermann, *Siddhartha*, p. 79
[12] Sartre, "Existentialism is Humanism", p. 301
[13] Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 22
[14] Hesse, *Siddhartha*, p. 23
[15] Ibid, pp. 23-24
[16] Another interpretation goes like this – the cessation of the ignorance can prevent the Birth-death spiral. The ignorance is nothing but to conceive things as its permanent nature. If one understands that every object is nothing but a particular state of existence of an object in a particular time, then the problem will become very similar to other school. To know the real character of the objects and understands its true nature is a solution to the suffering.
[17] Ibid, p. 79
[18] Ibid., Pg., 21
[19] This view of absurdity is first expounded by Soren Kierkegaard in the context of Christianity. For him, absurdity is limited to actions and choices of human beings. They emerge from human freedom and lack a foundation outside of themselves. This notion is further developed by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. In the literary field, it was first expressed in Sartre's novel *Nausea* and also explored by Albert Camus in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*.
[20] Michelman, Stephen. *The A to Z of Existentialism*, Pg., 28
[21] Hesse, p. 55
[22] Michelman, Stephen. *Existentialism*, p. 134
[23] Nietzsche proposed a notion termed as "the will to power" where will works as a medium, through which man strives for what he wants to be. This plays a very important role in his philosophy to explain 'superman'.
[24] Hesse, Hermann, *Siddhartha*, p. 81
[25] Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 196

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The Mythifcation of History and the Historification of Myth: Myth and Mimesis in Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*

POOJA MITTAL BISWAS

History and myth are inseparable. Indeed, the farther back in time one goes, the more a nation's history becomes entangled with (and inseparable from) myth. In the accompanying paper, I discuss how Rushdie uses myth-making to revision India's history in *Midnight's Children*. However, history can be revisioned by mimesis just as effectively as it can be by myth-making; indeed, to the diasporic mind, mimesis is an essential tool of survival.

Diasporic mimesis takes on two forms. The first is a mimesis of the homeland's myths and traditions, in order to maintain a sense of belonging and identity that is congruent with one's ethnic ancestry. The second is a mimesis of the customs of the new land—the land to which the diasporic individual has traveled. This second form of mimesis is only natural, since geographical displacement (and re-placement) requires a considerable degree of intellectual and emotional adaptation. Thus, the diasporic mind is in a state of perpetual translation, in which both forms of mimesis intercept and merge.

This merging of narratives—native and foreign, familiar and unfamiliar, ancient and new—is the fruitful "Third Space" (Bhabha 74-75) to which Homi Bhabha refers. It is by no means a stable space, being as tumultuous as the merging of Ganga and Yamuna, the two greatest rivers of India. What makes this analogy particularly suited to the diasporic imagination is the fact that the mythical river, Saraswati, is crucial to the merging Ganga and Yamuna. Also known as *Triveni Sangam* or "Union of Three," this triple knot of rivers—two geographical, one mythical—is also considered a symbol of life (Lane).

The third river—that of myth—is what allows communication and transferance between the two halves of the diasporic mind. The Third Space is, in this case, a mythical one—a psychological Saraswati, where story-telling becomes the unifying force between "home" and "abroad."

> Invisible landscapes remain important in the mythologies of all the great religions. Every 12 years at Allahabad in northern India, a great Hindu pilgrimage called the *Triveni* is made to the point at which three sacred rivers converge: the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati. The third river is the most sacred of all, but it is not to be found on any map. This is a mythical river, having long ago disappeared from the earth, thought now to flow underground, in hidden fields of the spirit. (Lane)

In these "hidden fields of the spirit," the diasporic writer uses myth as the creative axis that balances displacement and re-placement. Myth is the language that both forms of mimesis can use in order to find voice. Since each mimesis—that of old customs, and recently adopted ones—partakes of the other through the connective tissue of myth, this

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Triveni of the mind becomes the creation of a new origin. The history of the homeland is rewritten from this viewpoint, as is the politics of the adoptive nation.

> For writers of the diaspora, many of them hailing from former colonies and empires of Europe, home is a problematic site, since the reality of home as well as its imaginative projection are vulnerably linked to an entire network of personal, national, social, and cultural identifications. This vulnerability is crucial. Traditionally the home has served as the site of origin, as a source for a nostalgic understanding of the continuities of private and public self, and a place for recovering or maintaining the stability of this self. However, for the diasporic consciousness, this stability always brushes up against the highly ramified nature of home as it is historically constructed. (Roy 104)

Caught in this dilemma of dual (or even multiple) identities, it is no wonder that diasporic writers prefer historically *de*constructed origins to "historically constructed" ones. Myth and mimesis—both prime methods of deconstruction—are used time and again in order to map, reorient and reinterpret the concept of home.

> Within the specific arena of the decolonised space of nationality, it becomes increasingly clear that such interrelationship lies at the very heart of the possibility for naming and representing home as a mark of postcoloniality. Indeed, the very possibility of representing home determines how the postcolonial consciousness connects the idea of home with history—how it imagines this history and sees itself as a historical "object" as well as "subject" of that history. (Roy 104)

The subjecthood of the diasporic self becomes naturally objectified by distance and time; the longer one is away from the homeland, and the farther away one goes, the more telescoped one's sense of identity becomes. To revision and absorb one's past through the mimesis of traditional myths is one of the ways for a diasporic subject to de-objectify itself. This de-objectification of the self is simultaneously a re-appropriation of identity. Instead of being a literal mimesis, it is a creative one; the new identity that emerges from the merging of myth and mimesis is a "postcolonial consciousness," and one that is aware of its dual narrative.

Shashi Tharoor, like Salman Rushdie, is a diasporic writer preoccupied with this dual narrative. However, he is better known as a diplomat and a political dignitary than he is as a writer; there is relatively little criticism written about his works as compared to, say, Rusdhie's. This is not to say that Tharoor produces less work, or that he belongs to a younger generation. Rather, Tharoor belongs very much to Rushdie's generation, and has written widely on a range of issues relating to India in both non-fiction and fiction, with thirteen non-fiction books and three novels. Among Tharoor's novels, *The Great Indian Novel* is an amalgam of Indian history and Indian myth, while *Riot (2001)* is a strictly realist examination of religiously-motivated violence in India. *Show Business (1992)*, on the other hand, is a light-hearted if acerbic novel that has also been made into a feature film.

In this paper, I hope to build a theoretical framework within which to place Tharoor's novels, particularly *The Great Indian Novel*. As a diasporic author who has lived in the United States and has traveled throughout the world, Tharoor's revisioning of India is especially rich in the postcolonial aesthetic. His use of mythological mimesis is particularly unique, and is an intriguing counterpart to Rushdie's magical realism, even though it is markedly different in its approach.

The *Mahabharata* is one of the great Indian texts, but it is also a seamless blend of history and myth. Myth is the writer's tool to revision and reinterpret history, and Tharoor uses

this most trusty of tools to revision India's history. In *The Great Indian Novel*, Shashi Tharoor re-contextualises the Indian independence movement within the mythological framework of the *Mahabharata*.

> Colonial Indian history is replete with instances where Indians arrogated subjecthood to themselves precisely by mobilising, within the context of "modern" institutions and sometimes on behalf of the modernising project of nationalism, devices of collective memory that were both antihistorical and antimodern. (Chakrabarty 340)

It is not only colonial Indian history, but also postcolonial history which is subject to creative re-contextualization. In the above quote, Dipesh Chakrabarty was not discussing diasporic literature in particular, nor was he discussing Shashi Tharoor's work. Nevertheless, his concept of "arrogated subjecthood" holds true for postcolonial diasporic literature, as much as it did for colonial history. Myth is one of the "devices of collective memory" that Indians as have continued to use throughout the centuries. Most recently, myth has become a means for diasporic Indians to connect with their national history, as well as their personal pasts. Tharoor and Rushdie have both used myth in their novels—Rushdie as a myth-maker, and Tharoor as a revisionist. Rushdie's myth-making in *Midnight's Children is fabulist*, and Tharoor's approach to the Indian independence movement is similarly satirical, but instead of creating new myths, Tharoor chooses to tap the rich and already existent vein of Indian mythology, using it as a new focal point with which to analyse Indian politics.

Tharoor's use of the *Mahabharata* can be seen as mimetic, but it is a deliberate mimicry, aimed at a sardonic deconstruction of a young India's misadventures. Lacan's comparison of mimicry and warfare is particularly relevant to Tharoor's revisionism, because political deconstruction is inherently aggressive, especially in a diasporic writer's hands.

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage . . . It is not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. (Lacan 99)

India's history is mottled, too, and mimesis is one of the most effective means by which a diasporic writer can camouflage his voice. In his book, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*, Tharoor acknowledges the mottled nature of India's history, and its almost overwhelming multiplicity. As he says, "The only possible idea of India is that of a nation greater than the sum of its parts" (Tharoor, *India* 5). Such a nation, constantly bursting at the seams with its many stories and mythologies, is particularly ripe for a mythical revisioning of its political history.

When speaking of Orientalism, Edward Said made a similar statement about mimetic narrative being "the specific form taken by written history to counter the permanence of vision" (Said 240). The vision Said is referring to is the idea of an unchanging, petrified history.

> Against this system of synchronic essentialism I have called vision because it presumes that the whole Orient can be seen panoptically, there is a constant pressure. The source of pressure is narrative, in that if any Oriental detail can be shown to move, or to develop, diachrony is introduced into the system. What seemed stable—and the Orient with stability and unchanging eternality—now appears unstable. Instability suggests that history, with its disruptive detail, its currents of change, its tendency towards growth, decline, or dramatic movement, is possible in the Orient and for the Orient. History and narrative by which

> history is represented argue that vision is insufficient, that "the Orient" as an unconditional ontological category does an injustice to the potential reality for change. (Said 240)

The tension between the permanent and the temporary, between the static idea and the ever-evolving reality, is the birthing ground of myth. Diasporic literature, by its very nature, treasures and celebrates instability instead of mourning it. Tharoor, by mimicking and adapting a traditional Hindu myth to suit a modern, cynical narrative, is capitalising on the very instability that fuels Indian history.

> [The] double signifies the difficult historical ground in which the postcolonial seeks his or her identity and the impossible distances the self negotiates in order to understand itself as a historical being. In this imagining, the unfamiliar grates against the grains of the familiar, and out of this encounter the profile of the self is born . . . (Roy 112)

This journey towards understanding oneself as a "historical being" is what encapsulates Tharoor's mimesis. The essential hybridity of the diasporic experience gifts a migrant with "a tongue that is forked, not false" (Bhabha 122). This fork is not merely a literary one, or even an ethnic one; it is an ideological one, enabling the diasporic writer to be more comfortable with the ironic diachrony that Said commented on. The dichotomies of myth and history, of narrative and silence, of dream and reality, of mimesis and originality—these dichotomies are deconstructed by the migrant's double vision, enabling these apparent opposites to partake of each other, and indeed to become each other.

> Diaspora disperses the locations of dwelling into an interstitial habitus. Nomadism is the most attenuated concept in relation to location. Yet even theories of nomadic rhizomes include "nodes"—those sites of intersecting movements or "lines of flight." (Kaplan 143)

Mythical mimesis is, perhaps, one of the "lines of flight" that the diasporic nomad uses to chart his journeys. In his interview with the BBC, Shashi Tharoor admitted that despite living outside of India for many years, he felt that he had managed to keep in touch with Indian concerns. Indeed, living abroad had given him a new appreciation of India's pluralism, and of how "India has been able to maintain a consensus on how to do without a consensus" (Tharoor, *Talking Point*). The multiple voices of *The Great Indian Novel*, embodying mythical characters as well as more recent political ones, celebrates this consensus-beyond-consensus. The sometimes dramatic, sometimes humorous mimesis of the *Mahabharata* in Tharoor's novel forms a powerful subversive narrative, that remains celebratory despite (or perhaps even because) of its subversion. By producing a text "rich in the traditions of *trompe-l'aeil*, irony, mimicry and repetition," Tharoor confirms Bhabha's statement that mimicry is "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha 122).

Of course, Bhabha's mimesis was a mimicry of the colonisers by the colonised, but it is just as effective when employed by a diasporic writer on the history and mythology of his own country. By injecting myth into history, Tharoor fosters an intellectual and moral uncertainty that prompts the reader to re-think the events leading up to and following India's independence.

Before continuing to analyse Tharoor's diasporic narrative, I should provide a brief guide to the mimetic structure of *The Great Indian Novel*. In Tharoor's novel, each major political player in India's independence has a parallel character from the *Mahabharata*. The novel's scribe, Ganapathi, is the only one who remains beyond the call of history; he symbolises the invisible voice of Ganesha, god of literature and teller of tales. That Tharoor

should borrow Ganesha's voice as his own is in itself a satirical mimesis, because far from imbuing the narrative with a godlike objectivity, Tharoor never fails to remind the reader of history's essential plurality, and of the unreliability of any scribe, no matter how divine.

> This is my story of the India I know, with its biases, selections, omissions, distortions, all mine. But you cannot derive your cosmogony from a single birth, Ganapathi. Every Indian must forever carry with him, in his head and heart, his own history of India. (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* ch. 1)

This disclaimer is reminiscent of Rusdhie's broken mirror (Rushdie 429), and of the uniquely diasporic awareness of a multiple centre. (Or, rather, an omnipresent one—a different focal point for every Indian, both in and out of India.) In his introduction to *The Great Indian Novel*, Tharoor makes a more explicit acknowledgment of his own subjectivity:

> In the pages that follow I embark upon a sweeping and highly personalised examination of contemporary India . . . This book is not a survey of modern Indian history, though it touches upon many of the principal events of the last five decades. It is not "reportage," though I do draw anecdotally upon my own travels and conversations in India. It is instead a subjective account, I hope both informed and impassioned, of the forces that have made (and nearly unmade) today's India, and about the India that I hope my sons will inherit in the second half-century after independence. (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* intr.)

Tharoor's choice of Ganapathi as the novel's scribe now makes sense. Ganapathi is the scribe of Ved Vyas, the narrator, who simultaneously embodies his namesake in the *Mahabharata* (the father of Dhritarashtra and Pandu) as well as the historical figure of Rajagopalachari. This three-way characterization can be found throughout the novel. Gangaji, for example, embodies both Bhishma (from the *Mahabharata*) and Mohandas Gandhi (from India's own history). The Congress split is represented by "the fratricidal war between Kauravas and Pandavas" (Gupta 304). Priya Duryodhani takes on the role of Duryodhana, one of the Kauravas, and the instigator of the war against the Pandavas. Interestingly enough, Duryodhani is also the fictional equivalent of Indira Gandhi, and is portrayed as a dictator. The character of Draupadi Moksari symbolises Indian democracy, and, like the Draupadi of the *Mahabharata*, is stripped and humiliated by Duryodhana (Indira Gandhi). By creating these parallels, Tharoor is "able simultaneously to allegorise the story of modem India in terms of the epic *Mahabharata* and to question the very notion of using the authority of tradition to offer certitudes in the seeming chaos of the present" (Rege 172).

This stunningly complex interplay of myth and history lends Tharoor's narrative its power. Jawaharlal Nehru is cast as Dhritarashtra, the blind king, because of his blind idealism and optimism. Morjari Desai, India's fourth prime minister, was as pure-hearted as he was ineffectual; he is cast as Yudhishtir. Indeed, Desai's ineffectuality is brought into merciless light by Tharoor's casting, especially given Draupadi chastising words in the *Mahabharata, as translated below by Amartya Sen*:

> If you choose to reject heroic action
> and see forbearance as the road to future happiness,
> then throw away your bow, the symbol of royalty,
> wear your hair matted in knots,
> stay here and make offerings in the sacred fire! (Sen 9)

Draupadi criticises Yudhishtir, her husband, for remaining a hermit in the forest, and for refusing to fight to defend his honour (and, by implication, hers). This exchange, bitter and recriminating as it is, becomes ironic in the light of *The Great Indian Novel*. Since Draupadi symbolises democracy, Morjari Desai's inability to protect it is equated to Yudhishtir's emasculation.

In the looking glass of myth, history's face becomes more human. Accessibility and subjectivity bring life to otherwise distant facts. Decades after independence, the failures and inefficacies of various politicians are revived and examined by the invigorating power of myth. The *Mahabharata*, being a text well-known among Indians and even among non-Indians, is an excellent source for this invigorating power. Tharoor explodes the stiff and petrified canvas of history by painting it in ancient colours—colours of myth recognizable to any Indian.

> [G]eographically displaced, cast in the form of a transnational figure, the diasporic artist occupies this dual site with an unstable equanimity. The knowledge of the colonial language-English—has historically offered places of privilege for the national bourgeoisie, and this privilege is the historical effect of colonialism. In fact, middle-class appropriation of the other tongue is in many ways an appropriation of that "other's" mastery. However, the diasporic individual, thrown into the reality of transnational hyphenation, is capable of rendering her "song" into "politics." [. . .] This recognition of ethnicity is the mark of the historicity of the postcolonial subject and its consciousness of the differentiations created by this history; it is not a fixed and given identity that is reiterated with the universal abandon of a modernist angst. (Roy 113)

Since Tharoor also occupies the territory of "transnational hyphenation," he uses the language of the coloniser—English—to retell the myths of the colonised. It is not, however, a negation of the original myth to retell it in another language; in fact it can be understood as a reverse colonization, in which the myths of the homeland appropriate and subvert the colonial narrative. This hyphenation is not an inequation; in the postcolonial context, the syntax of mastery is re-making itself into a syntax of hybridity. An example would be the following statement by Ved Vyas, the narrator of Tharoor's novel:

> Some of our more Manichean historians tend to depict the British villains as supremely accomplished—the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent manipulators of the destiny of India. Stuff and nonsense, of course. (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* 116)

In obviously British language, Tharoor slyly subverts the British Raj. The joke is, of course, a double-edged sword; it uses the language of the coloniser against the coloniser, and the risk of this strategy proving ineffective is very high. However, what makes it effective in Tharoor's case is the injection of a very Indian myth into the English syntax. When describing the cataclysmic election of 1977, for example, the narrator of Tharoor's novel compares it to the battle of Kurukshetra:

> Life is Kurukshetra. History is Kurukshetra. The struggle between Dharma and adharma is a struggle our nation, and each one in it, engages in on every single day of our existence. That struggle, that battle, took place before this election; it will continue after it. (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* 391)

As a diasporic writer, Tharoor can bring the mammoth weight of Idian myth and archetypal signifiers to bear against the pressure of a colonial, English narrative. And yet, instead of causing fissures or cracks in the narrative, the clash of these two giants becomes a union; one that subverts both sides of the argument, and celebrates the hybridity

of the postcolonial narrative. The internal and the external become indivisible after re-absorbing each other through the osmotic layer of mythical mimesis; the postcolonial and the colonial are similarly deconstructed.

Tharoor's mimesis is a postmodern reawakening of Said's diachrony. This diachrony is kin to Fanon's "zone of occult instability" (Fanon 168), a creative and revolutionary instability fueled by deconstructive mimesis. From a colonial point of view, this mimesis is targeted at the colonisers by the colonised—at the ruling few by the many subalterns. What makes Tharoor's mimesis postmodern is that it is directed at his own country, and at his own country's past—not at the ruling few by the many subalterns, but rather at the root by its many offshoots. Moreover, the mimesis itself takes the form of a great Indian myth, which Tharoor then transforms into *The Great Indian Novel*. Tharoor's right to practice such a mimesis may be challenged by those Indian critics who consider diasporic writers outsiders, no longer capable of speaking for or about India.

One such critic is Makarand Paranjape, who accuses diasporic writers of debasing India abroad. Certainly, many diasporic authors, such as Rusdhie and Tharoor, portray India as a less than ideal state. But does their non-resident status immediately invalidate them as commentators on India, and on its history? Paranjape certainly thinks so.

> The dirty job of India bashing need no longer be performed by a white man; non-resident Indians will do it equally well, if not better. The demand for such "insiders" who are actually outsiders is truly so great in the West that India turns out to be the only marketable commodity they have as writers. The position of such diasporics is akin to that of African middlemen who sold slaves to the white traders. [. . .] In short, from being underprivileged, unwanted, insecure, marginalised, denationalised and faceless, such diasporics have suddenly begun to loom large over us [resident Indians], clouding our own independent access to the world and the world's unhampered assessment of our lives. (Paranjape 239-240)

It is fascinating that, in his disavowal of diasporic narratives, Paranjape has revealed precisely *why* the diasporic writer can also be considered a subaltern—a postmodern subaltern, but very much of one, nonetheless. As Paranjape admits, diasporic authors are often "marginalised," and his comments themselves are a kind of marginalization. From this perspective, it becomes understandable that a diasporic author such as Shashi Tharoor would choose mimesis as a creative tool. Perhaps it is true that "India seen from afar can never be the same as India seen from close up" (Paranjape 240), but this cultural parallax may be an advantage when understanding (or attempting to understand) a pluralistic India. When speaking of *The Great Indian Novel*, Tharoor responded to the question of plurality, diasporic hybridity and Indianness:

> This book is a paean to India, yet it emanates from the pen of a United Nations official who has lived outside India for most of his adult life. I am, indeed, often asked how I can reconcile my passionate faith in India with my internationalist work for the United Nations. I see no contradiction; indeed, both emerge from the same pluralist convictions. The Indian adventure is that of human beings of different ethnicities and religions, customs and costumes, cuisines and colours, languages and accents, working together under the same roof, sharing the same dreams. (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel* intr.)

The diasporic writer may be no more invalidated by his or her perceived Otherness than a flower is invalidated by being transplanted into a foreign climate. Distance—to the homeland, or away from it—is better mapped by empathy than it is by miles. It is the lack of empathy for one's subjects, and a callous disregard for them, that invalidates a writer's work; therefore, it is the enduring passion of the Indian diaspora for India that

validates its work. This passion for India, which is also "the passion of the origin" (Derrida 373), is in a sense self-validating, but it is this very self-validation that inspires Paranjape's doubt. When one views oneself as standing at the nexus, at the origin, then the views of all others become naturally displaced. This might appear to be a facile or even childish declaration, but aesthetic displacement is a contentious issue, and it is difficult to make any statement at all without seeming facile. Indeed, what is displacement, and where does the nexus of art reside? For a deconstructionist, or for a diasporic writer such as Tharoor, the answer is obvious: the nexus can be found under every stone, if one has the eyes to see it. But is this, too, an over-simplification?

> Art, despite its conscious or unconscious embeddedness in historical processes and its obscure physiological provenance, points to an intelligibility we have not understood. How does art convert learning or information into a vital tradition, what Wordsworth called "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," unless it is by getting "the closest fix on the mystery of sensation" (Lyotard), and waking a sort of soul in sense, or even sense itself? (Hartman 226)

The confusion that infects any debate of literary authenticity is caused by this very issue. Myth and history would be easier to deal with if they weren't inseparable; artists and writers need not be charged with inauthenticity if art did not itself partake of historicity (and vice versa). But since it *does*, the artist immediately becomes responsible—or, at the very least, accountable—for his or her portrayal of history. Tharoor's mythical mimesis is a deliberate historicization of art, and critics like Paranjape take issue with it precisely because Tharoor, as a diasporic writer, no longer has "the closest fix" on India's history. That is to say, Tharoor's physical distance from India is seen as a creative and psychological encumbrance. I would argue, however, that mythology is the "vital tradition" that enables a diasporic writer to connect with the homeland—and that, by using an Indian myth to reconnect with India, Tharoor has arrogated his subjecthood as an Indian (Chakrabarty 340).

Paranjape is not the only academic who has doubts about Tharoor's authenticity; another critical observer is Kanishka Chowdhury. In her essay, "Revisioning History: Shashi Tharoor's Great Indian Novel," Chowdhury raises concerns similar to Paranjape's:

> [P]ostcolonial writers, such as Tharoor, are themselves the victims of divided allegiances and ambivalent loyalties: their class position among largely illiterate populations, the material and discursive attractions of metropolitan centres, and the lure of recognition and publication offers from London and New York, among other factors, contribute to their unavoidable involvement in Western cultural systems. Said, Fanon, and Ashcroft, in their urgency to celebrate the recovery of the "national" or "native" voice, avoid highlighting the inevitable contradictions that must accompany any process of cultural recovery. An attempt to recover a "national" past is necessarily exclusive and can only succeed by eliminating other oppositional voices. (Chowdhury 41)

Chowdhury neglects to mention that "cultural recovery" is not only *trans*cultural recovery. Indeed, any act of reconnecting with one's national past, whether one is a resident or a non-resident, is an act of cultural recovery. As such, the exclusivity, incompleteness and subjectivity of revisioning history is not applicable to postcolonial diaspora alone; it is equally applicable to any individual, in any time or place, who is seeking to recover his or her past. In recovering their memories of the Holocaust, for example, each Jewish individual's journey will be highly subjective and personal; this exclusivity does not, however, render it inauthentic (Hartman 226).

> The India to which Tharoor refers is seen through his eyes—narrow eyes that largely ignore the plight of the vast underclass for whom independence merely suggested a ceremonial shift in power. In a sense, Tharoor's project of writing back to the centre sadly enacts the erasure of the subaltern or the underclass. (Chowdhury 43)

I would agree with Chowdhury insofar as the "narrowness" of Tharoor's perspective is concerned; the gaze of any writer is, after all, narrow in the sense that it cannot express or borrow from the gaze of any other person. However, I would disagree with her assumption about the nature of Tharoor's creative goals. Tharoor's project is not writing *back* to the centre, but rather *around* it. If anything, his "project" is a personal reclamation of diasporic identity, in which myth and mimesis create a circular structure around India's past. The peculiarity of this gaze—glancing away and then towards—creates an intellectual parallax that resembles the dual identity of the diasporic mind.

Despite its name, *The Great Indian Novel* is not an authoritative or even a nationalistic text; the title (and, indeed, the tone) of the novel is sardonic. It is a diasporic text, and as such is not preoccupied with writing back to the centre at all, even though that might appear to be the surface goal. Instead, Tharoor writes back and then *away*; the text mimics the journey of Tharoor himself, both as a diasporic individual and as a diplomat. The Hindu ritual of *parikrama*, for example, is the circling of a holy place in order to pay homage to it, without ever approaching it directly (Nelson 252-254). Tharoor's novel is one such *parikrama*, albeit a postmodern one with decidedly subversive motives. It is true that *The Great Indian Novel* does not focus on "the plight of the vast underclass," but this shift of focus is part of Tharoor's mythological mimesis, and by no means an "erasure of the subaltern." The *Mahabharata* itself had, as its focus, the war between the ruling families of the Kauravas and the Pandavas; in adapting this story to modern India, Tharoor naturally depicted the political conflict between India's leaders. It is also doubtful that most Indians, including those in the subaltern, would view the independence of their country as a mere "ceremonial shift in power." The harsh practicalities of everyday life existed before and after independence, but the symbolic value of freedom in itself was immense. Had the "vast underclass" perceived independence as nothing but a shift in power, Gandhi would not have been able to spark such a mass revolution among, within and by the subaltern. Tharoor's depiction of this freedom struggle is wry and often irrelevant, but the very fact that he uses it as a mimetic focal point emphasises its importance—to all Indians, be they subaltern or diasporic.

Unlike Paranjape, Chowdhury eventually acknowledges that "Tharoor's work, despite all its contradictions and failures, creates a postcolonial space which celebrates the possibilities of revisioning colonialist knowledge" (Chowdury 47). She goes on to say that:

> The battle between the centre's imposition of discursive restrictions on the postcolonial writer and the writer's creative efforts to break free from this imposition will continue. And writers such as Shashi Tharoor will be caught between the contradictions of their class position and their efforts to "redraw" frontiers and rewrite histories. They are trapped in an inevitable predicament: even as they attempt to challenge the hegemonic entailments of metropolitan culture, they simultaneously renew their cultural contract with the metropolis. However, despite their inevitable complicity in past and contemporary systems of colonialist knowledge, writers like Tharoor succeed insofar as they provide a corrective for the epistemic violence of the European colonisers. (Chowdhury 47)

This might appear to be a significant compromise, but the language of Chowdhury's otherwise balanced assessment is still that of colonial loyalism versus postcolonial

hybridity. This is, in itself, a quiet form of "epistemic violence," which undermines the authenticity of the postcolonial diaspora. By using the word "complicity," Chowdhury is immediately casting the diasporic writer in as the traitorous Other; or, perhaps even more condemingly, as the traitorous Self. This language would not be out of place if commenting on a colonial text written during colonial times; but in a postcolonial context, this Othering of the diaspora is more regressive than progressive. Tharoor's dual mimesis understandably invites such scepticism, because it makes very obvious use of apparently oppositional dialectics. The point that Chowdhury and Paranjape both miss, however, is that for a diasporic individual, these dialectics are *not* oppositional; they are often contradictory, but they are not oppositional. They cannot be oppositional, simply because they are inseparable. The *Triveni* of traditional myth, Western language and personal mimesis deconstructs the binary opposites of "colonial" and "postcolonial," and brings forth a Third Space that is hybrid rather than compartmentalised. The fragments of Rushdie's broken mirror repair themselves through the power of myth; in Tharoor's case, mimesis is the adhesive agent that unifies myth and history. What Paranjape's—and, to a lesser extent, Chowdhury's—approach represents is a view based on colonial binaries rather than postcolonial deconstruction. As a result, the hybrid nature of diasporic literature may appear to be a kind of "complicity" to them.

Mimesis has been called into doubt from the earliest days of artistic endeavor; Plato exiled poets form his ideal city, precisely because he believed that their mimicry of the Forms invalidated them (Plato, *The Republic* Book II, 390a8-b4). The distance between the Form and the imitation is not unlike the distance Paranjape places between India and the diaspora. Tharoor's metamythical storytelling is doubly mimetic, distanced as it is by time (history) and space (diasporic displacement). The question that remains is whether mimesis in itself invalidates a writer, or whether it validates the text precisely by eschewing any claim to objective authority.

> Art becomes a crucial battleground for two reasons. It stands at the beginning of mankind's desire to create simulacra, the question always remaining: simulacra of what and for what purpose? Moreover, art does not disappear into what it represents. As a medium with its own mode of being, it maintains a distance between itself and that reality. This very distance, intrinsic to its reflective power, makes art a doubtful agency in any pressing conflict. We often fall back, therefore, on praising art as special medium among media—something that mimes the rich, neglected materiality of things. As such, it revives traces of a half-forgotten intensity of perception . . . (Hartman 227)

In the above quote, Geoffrey Hartman is in fact talking about the artistic depiction of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the points he makes are relevant for the depiction of any era of historic upheaval. Tharoor creates a "simulacrum" of post-independence India that may very well contain the "epistemic distortions" (Paranjape 240) of a diasporic gaze. Of course, any simulacrum whatsoever is bound to contain distortions, but I would say that it is this self-conscious subjectivity which both rescues art from the debate of authenticity, and validates it as a form of expression. Mimesis is not only the passive re-acquaintance, within one's mind, of "the rich, neglected materiality of things." Instead, it is an active and even aggressive appropriation and revisioning of data—be it history, myth or language itself. Children learn to speak through mimesis (Donald 44-47); so does the diasporic writer learn of India through creative mimesis. Validity and authenticity are not binary states, nor are they binary switches within a cultural circuit, with only two possible positions of *on* and *off*. Being in or out of India is not what determines a diasporic

artist's authenticity; it is the artwork itself, and its worth as a mimetic object that makes a self-conscious, reflective and enlightening use of mimesis.

Paranjape claims that the diasporic writer's work is more likely to be distorted because of the writer's "marginalization," but marginalization is a phenomenon that effects minorities everywhere, both within India and outside of it. Tharoor's article in *The New York Times* emphasises this universal marginalization:

> We are all minorities in India. A typical Indian stepping off a train, a Hindi-speaking Hindu man from the Gangetic plain state of Uttar Pradesh, might cherish the illusion that he represents the "majority community," to use an expression much favored by the less industrious of our journalists. But he does not. As a Hindu he belongs to the faith adhered to by some 82 percent of the population, but a majority of the country does not speak Hindi, a majority does not hail from Uttar Pradesh, and if he were visiting, say, the state of Kerala, he would discover that a majority there is not even male.
>
> Worse, this archetypal Hindu has only to mingle with the polyglot, polychrome crowds thronging any of India's main railway stations to realise how much of a minority he really is. Even his Hinduism is no guarantee of majorityhood, because his caste automatically places him in a minority as well. If he is a Brahmin, 90 percent of his fellow Indians are not; if he is a Yadav (one of the intermediate castes), 85 percent of Indians are not, and so on. (Tharoor, "India's Odd, Enduring Patchwork")

In short, Paranjape's claim of native authenticity is dangerously Orwellian in its belief that all Indians are equal, but some Indians are more equal than others. (The "more equal" ones being those still living in India, as opposed to those who have left it due to choice or circumstance.) The Otherness of being a diasporic Indian has, if anything, made Tharoor more conscious of the many Others within India; this lends his work an authenticity that is more empathic in nature than it is ideological. There is no convenient, binary measure of validity; there is no switch between the authentic and the inauthentic. Instead, there is a spectrum of belonging on which writers—diasporic or otherwise—can situate themselves.

Mimesis has been traditionally understood as the weapon of the colonial subaltern—but in postcolonial times, it has also become a tool of recollection for members of the diaspora. *The Great Indian Novel* is testament to the use of mimesis as aesthetic historicization, wherein the diasporic writer revisions and mimics mythological characters. By plumbing the depths of the *Mahabharata*, Tharoor has successfully situate himself as the invisible scribe, Ganapathi, and has contextualised Indian history within a system of mythical allegory.

The transition narrative will always remain grievously incomplete. On the other hand, maneuvers are made within the space of the mimetic—and therefore within the project called "Indian" history—to represent the "difference" and the "originality" of the "Indian," and it is in this cause that the antihistorical devices of memory and the antihistorical "histories" of the subaltern classes are appropriated. Thus peasant/worker constructions of "mythical" kingdoms and "mythical" pasts/futures find a place in texts designated "Indian" history precisely through a procedure that subordinates these narratives to the rules of evidence and to the secular, linear calendar that the writing of "history" must follow (Chakrabarty 340).

Dipesh Chakrabarty does not include the marginalised, diasporic individual in his definition of the subaltern. As Spivak would say, the diasporic individual may not be "a

true subaltern" (Spivak 35), but as we have just seen, members of the diaspora do struggle with claims of (in)authenticity and voicelessness. In this sense, Tharoor's use of myth can be seen as a maneuver made "within the space of the mimetic," where the *Mahabharata* is used as an "antihistorical device." Ironically, the diasporic perspective places Chakrabarty's concept of a "secular, linear calendar" (that of Western colonial powers) squarely back in the hands of resident Indians, particularly historical purists like Paranjape. A diasporic writer is interrogated by "the rules of evidence," much like subaltern speakers are/were interrogated by Western canon. This is a rather perverse parallel to draw attention to, but it does place Tharoor's work within the mimetic tradition. The diasporic experience is now a global phenomenon, and mimesis has likewise expanded to fulfill the needs of postcolonial minorities abroad. The following quote, taken from one of Tharoor's articles in *Newsweek*, is a particularly poignant reflection on the diasporic condition.

New York cabbies love to tell their life stories—how they came to America, usually on a tourist visa they've long overstayed, and how they live six to a room so they can send the bulk of their earnings home. Pakistani cabbies are particularly generous, in the experience of this Indian, often refusing my fare with the comment, "You are a brother." Of course, this gesture only prompts me to give a larger tip, but it speaks of a solidarity of the displaced, two Subcontinentals in a foreign land, drawn together in the shared space of a New York cab (Tharoor, "Is That Brooklyneese or Bengali?").

The "solidarity of the displaced" is nothing less than the diasporic need for a *re*-placement—not in the sense of finding a substitute place of belonging, but rather of placing oneself within an already existent landscape—the psychological landscape of one's homeland. The cab driver's urge to communicate his personal history is, in a sense, also the diasporic writer's urge to create. Both forms of communication are contextualizations—placing the individual in a larger network of interweaving myths, ideas and belongings. Story-telling and mimesis are essential to the diasporic consciousness, and to its creative force.

The dust of history never settles. Stirred by the feet of passers by, it cycles between myth and memory. To diasporic writers, mimesis becomes not only a kind of remembrance, but also an active participation in the revisioning of their homeland's history.

University of Sydney, Australia

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Untranslatability as Resistance: A Study of Mahashweta Devi's *Draupadi*

DEEPSHIKHA BEHERA

Abstract

Mahashweta Devi in her *Bangla* short story "Draupadi," denies readers access to the tribal *Santhal* song that her protagonist sings. When Gayatri Spivak translates this text into English she follows Mahashweta Devi's footsteps in retaining the indigenous tribal lyrics in their original form. The idea of untranslatability enables us to question the paradigm of "world literature" and the cosmopolitanism upon which it is founded while rupturing the presumed coherence in the process of translation; thus, in turn, exposing the inability of western and postcolonial discourses to encapsulate the heterogeneity of indigenous cultures. This paper delves into the idea of the 'untranslatable' as an anomalous outcome of the process of translation posing a threat to the structure of translation. Like the threshold the 'untranslatable' defines a territory that exists neither within nor without; it views translation as exercise of power that seeks to homogenize the other and efface or erase the irreducible alterities of indigenous discourses. Untranslatability becomes the vantage point or chasm which problematizes translation and exposes the power relations along with the discursive, epistemological violence and violation that occurs in the process of translation. In refusing to be translated, we see a certain resistance to the violence of a mainstream language that is baked by political and social power. If translation is a mode of address, untranslatability becomes a refusal to be incorporated by the mode of address. Untranslatability as a process resists fetishization of indigenous discourses as "exotic", "alien" and accepts the heterogeneity and plurality of subversive elements latent within alternative ways of expression.

Introduction

> "Split identity, kaleidoscope of identities: can we be a saga for ourselves without being considered mad or fake?"
> "Saying nothing, nothing needs to be said, nothing can be said."
>
> —Julia Kristeva

If translation is the monument that houses world literature, untranslatability blooms like a flower between the cracks in the wall. While it exposes the flaws of the structure, it adds a touch of uniqueness to it. In the paradigm of "world literature" or to be accurate, "literatures of the world" that is sustained and fuelled by the process of translation, the question of the 'untranslatable' becomes relevant more than ever before. The untranslatable elements are the cues which maintain the heterogeneity and 'foreignness' of world literature. Untranslatability exposes the inability of Western discourses, even post-colonial discourses to encapsulate the plurality of indigenous and foreign cultures.

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It becomes the vantage point or chasm which problematizes translation and unmasks the power relations along with the discursive, epistemological violence that occurs in the process of translation.

The 'foreign' and the 'untranslatable'

Before we discuss translation and the problems that emerge in the form of the 'untranslatable', it is necessary to understand the foreigner's position in a society. All translation is an attempt at knowing the 'Other', to understand that which is unlike us, to comprehend that which is incomprehensible. Who is a foreigner? What qualifies him to be different? These are the questions that must be addressed if we have to understand the necessity as well as the futility of the process of translation. Identity is always constructed through opposition as we describe ourselves in lieu with what is not us. Julia Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves* writes that the figure of the foreigner is crucial for the consciousness of one's differences, what we cannot identify with. The look and touch of the 'Other' is the primary instance of signification. The figure of the foreigner allows us to reflect upon our ability to "accept new modalities of otherness" (Kristeva 25). Thus it is only by demarcating the boundaries with the 'Other' that our self can be constructed, yet there is a duality that dominates us, the dilemma of being torn from and identifying with the 'Other'. Distinguishing the 'Other' is inevitably tied to identifying with the 'Other'. The translation of the self to the 'Other' and vice-versa, thus is crucial for the "constitution and survival of the self".

Cultural encounters or meetings are the spaces that provide platform to such discourses. Any 'encounter' or meeting requires interpretation or a mediation between the two cultures or individuals. It is pivotal to understand and interpret the 'Other' to create an interface that allows dialogue and makes communication possible. How do we understand or interpret the other? This is the nib from which untranslatability and incomprehensibility brew. We interpret the 'Other' in terms of meanings and signs that pre-exist in our culture and hence there can never be a complete understanding or a state of complete translation. The untranslatable is the foreign, there is no substitute for it in the target language or culture; it refuses to be appropriated or assimilated. To 'translate' is to appropriate the other. 'Appropriate' is derived from the Latin *ad propruis* meaning to make one's own. This attempt to make one's own what was initially foreign is what I focus on. How much of the foreignness of the foreign text should be retained while translating? What happens when a foreign text leaves its 'home' and enters the domain of world literature? What happens to the authenticity and uniqueness of a foreign text when it suffers the violence of mainstream languages?

Mahashweta Devi in her Bangla short story "Draupadi" that appeared in her collection *Agnigarbha* (translates as "Womb of Fire"), denies readers access to the Santhal song that her protagonist sings, or the various phrases in Santhal and hybrid dialects that the characters in her story converse in. Written in Bangla, the story "Draupadi", isn't meant for an eloquent reading. Devi wants her readers to be aware of the heterogeneity that stems from cultural encounters. She deliberately makes her readers aware of the problems faced in translation; both literal, i.e. the words failing to find a substitute in the other language and metaphorical, i.e. the cultural signs of one culture that cannot be comprehended by the members of another. Her narrative is successful in highlighting the urgency of addressing these untranslatable elements which are crucial to encapsulate the heterogeneity of endemic discourses. When Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak translates

this into English she retains the Santhal lyrics in their original form but fails to capture the dialect variants and various registers used by Devi. I aim to examine two texts, i.e. the original text of "Draupadi" written by Devi in Bangla and Spivak's translated text in English to study how translation, due to its very nature is inevitably tied to untranslatability. My paper shall view translation as an exercise of power that seeks to homogenize the 'other' and suppress the irreducible alterities of indigenous discourses. In refusing to be translated, we see a certain resistance to the violence of a mainstream language that is strengthened by political and social power. If translation is a mode of address initiated by the dominant discourses, untranslatability becomes a refusal to be incorporated by the mode of address, and hence in resisting appropriation, we see the defiance and reticence of the 'Other'. As a *modus operandi*, it resists fetishization of indigenous discourses as 'exotic', 'alien' and secures the heterogeneity and plurality of subversive elements latent within alternative ways of expression. The idea of untranslatability enables us to question the paradigm of "world literature" and the cosmopolitanism upon which it is founded, in rupturing the presumed coherence in the process of translation. The differences between languages and cultures are numerous and each word has a significant set of concepts attached to it within a language. While translating, it is obvious that there are certain words that do not "carry across" (translation is derived from the Latin *translatio* that means to carry across). There can never be absolute equivalence between two cultures and languages and as Lisa Foran quotes Ricoeur, "misunderstanding is a right and that translation is theoretically impossible" (Foran 82). Untranslatability can be seen as a ledge where diverging opinions can be seen in conflict with one another. To understand untranslatability we have to perceive translation as a process that has no finite end, but rather is interminable. The idea of untranslatability finds echo in Humboldt's Introduction to *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus where he finds the text "untranslatable", yet goes on to translate it. Barbara Cassin in her *Dictionary of Untranslatables* describes untranslatable as an "interminability" of translation, while Emily Apter in *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* describes untranslatable as that "what one keeps on (not) translating". Apter mentions this inherent disapproval of translation in Abdelfattah Kilito's injunctions of a phrase that he used for his lectures, "Thou shalt not translate me" (Apter 148). She claims a "right to untranslatability" amidst the ongoing translational ventures that assume cultural substitutability of texts and cultures. Derrida also talks of an eternal translation, as he likens it to deconstruction, a state in which "language, people and events always already find themselves in". For him, translation is always happening, never reaching finitude. There can never be a pure language, every language, akin to identity that we discussed earlier is nourished and enriched by other languages, by the process of borrowing from each other. Thus the incorporation of the foreign or the untranslatable in the cultural repository of signs and symbols is not an impossible proposition. For Derrida, the issue of translation does not border on the binaries of translatable/untranslatable as in case of translation studies, but rather an inevitable coupling. Every text for him is at the same time both translatable and untranslatable. Paul Ricoeur on the other hand feels that every translator must discard this dichotomy of translatable/untranslatable and focus instead on the faithfulness/betrayal aspect of the text. In the process of translation, a third space is created between the readers of the translated text and the author of the original, and it is the translator who plays the host to both parties. In being faithful to one, he/she must betray the other. The translator thus "engages in an act of linguistic hospitality", thus aiming to strike a balance between the familiar and the foreign.

The Naxalbari Movement, "Draupadi" and the "female militant"

"Terai[1] is wailing
My heart grieves with her
Flaming fields of Naxalbari are crying out
For her seven slain daughters."

The Naxalbari movement began as a dispute between the peasants and the local landlords over their share of crop harvests in 1967 in Prasadujote village in Naxalbari district of Darjeeling. It led to the police opening fire on an army of peasants of around two thousand in number. This followed the death of nine people, seven of whom were women. Devi uses this historical setup as a perfect backdrop for "Draupadi", and explores the aftermath of violence and counter-violence it created. The story revolves around a tribal called Dopdi Mejhen who is a comrade of the militant group that resisted the brutality of the Special Forces in the region. Dopdi Mejhen is thus representative of the resistance offered by the marginal indigenous groups against the dominance of state authority. "Draupadi" is a tale of refusal and defiance against the process of homogenization under the banner of the nation state and the rhetoric of development used by the state to disguise the violence it perpetrates. Named after the Aryan heroine of the epic *The Mahabharata*, Dopdi's existence abounds in duality. Draupadi aka Dopdi Mejhen is a tribal with an unlisted '*Aryan*' name, she belongs to a clan of the Munda tribe who have been coerced into the realm of Indian state but have always been marginalised and neglected. When she is eventually caught, she is gang raped and tortured by the army officials. But Mahashweta uses this very bit of what appears as oppression and domination as a mode of resistance and triumph for this tribal woman who is willing to give up her life in order to save her comrades. Devi inverts the *Hindu* myth of Draupadi's humiliation in the Kuru court by the Kauravas in the epic *The Mahabharata,* by denying any protection to Dopdi. She translates a myth that has always portrayed the female as a victim who can only be redeemed by a chivalrous male deity, to serve the contrary purpose. This can be studied under the light of the translator's agency. A translator can choose to emphasize or highlight a text from a specific point of view. David Damrosch in *How to Read World Literature?*, writes about the linguistic and social nature of the translator's choices and how these choices are based on the translator's "literary and cultural values and their sense of readers' expectations" (Damrosch 68). I shall return to this notion of the translator's choice later when I discuss Spivak's translation of "Draupadi". So Devi's tribal Dopdi has no Krishna or *Dharma* to protect her feminine chastity, neither does she need one. Her agency lies in claiming her raped, mutilated body as her weapon and refusing to cover it. The moment Senanayak, the army chief, thinks he has been able to destroy her and has exposed her vulnerability, it is he who is terrified at the sight of a naked, "unarmed target" marching towards him. The narrative technique employed by Devi has various instances of both literal and metaphorical untranslatable elements. The language spoken by Draupadi and Dulna is indigenous and is incomprehensible to the army officials employed in the region. The Santhal song that she sings is later discovered to be in Mundari language which is difficult even for the Santhals to understand. The song and the phrase Ma-Ho is used by Devi as tools to suggest a mockery of the process of translation itself. The inability to comprehend the messages results in Senanayaka summoning tribal specialists from Kolkata, who are unable to decipher the meaning. Finally it is Chamru, the water bearer who is called to help and who effortlessly declares it as a battle cry with a smirk on his face that is subtly indicative of Devi's own

apprehensions about the farce of translation. "Finally the omniscient Senanayaka summons Chamru, the water carrier of the camp. He giggles when he sees the two specialists" (Spivak 395). What is significant here is the focus that Devi wants us to shift from meaning towards rhythm? Even if the translator in Senanayaka is able to decipher the meaning of the songs and phrases, Devi wants to tell us that it is not the meaning but rather the rhythm that matters. Referring back to Humboldt's *Introduction* to Agamemnon we find him stating the need to prioritize syntax over semantics and focusing on the rhythms of the Greeks, which he discerns to be specific to their culture. Likewise, for the indigenous tribes, it is the rhythms that are more significant than the meanings. Despite his stringent efforts Senanayaka is unable to read their signs and codes. We witness an inherent desire in Senanayaka to understand, comprehend or contain that which he cannot decipher. We discern in him a hermeneutic desire to understand the 'other' better than they themselves do, or to become like the enemy in order to understand them. "In order to destroy the enemy, become one" (Spivak 394). In the figure of Senanayaka and Arjan Singh the two army chiefs for Operation Jharkhani, Devi portrays the figure of this orthodox translator who reads and listens only what he wants to. While Arjan Singh stereotypes the Santhals and panics at the sight of any coloured tribal, Senanayaka fetishizes the tribal as an object of his intellectual and political endeavours. He wishes to write a book on them to showcase his expertise on knowledge about the tribes. "He has also decided that in his written work he will demolish the gentlemen and highlight the message of the harvest workers" (Spivak 394). This is clearly indicative of his dilemma between 'theory' and 'practice' as Devi overtly mentions in the story. Senanayaka's plight is that of the translator who stands at the edge of his own language and seeks the foreignness of the other. His understanding of the foreignness of the tribal culture does not undo the alienness or reduce the disparities. His expression, "All will come clear, he says. I have almost deciphered Dopdi's song" seems futile and bleak (Spivak 395). He must be aware of his own entanglement with his native language and reconcile with the fact that he can never comprehend the incongruent tongue. Translators usually interpret the culture and language of the source so as to meet the demands of the readers of the target language. Senanayaka, has a close affinity to this category of translators. As he wants to study Dopdi as a field hand, he fears that her apprehension as his object of search as well as research will be destroyed. "Dopdi is a field hand. Veteran fighter. Search and destroy. Dopdi Mejhen is about to be apprehended. Will be destroyed. Regret" (Spivak 400). Devi also presents a scathing attack on historical discourses and the construction of a national identity that have so often excluded the histories of minorities and the tribes. Nationalism coerces the heterogeneous identities of individuals under the banner of the Preamble which homogenizes them as "We the People" . Homi Bhabha in his chapter "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation" in *The Location of Culture*, describes the emergence of a modern national narrative, arising out of the tension between the signification of people as "an a priori historical presence, a pedagogical object"; and "the people constructed in the performance of a narrative, its enunciatory 'present'" (Bhabha 147). While the pedagogical, built upon the historical sedimentation of facts and histories, tends to homogenize differences in forging a singular identity, the performative that is lived and performed becomes a source for the growth of multiplicity and plurality. In "Draupadi", we find Devi employing several registers and dialects to highlight the encounter between disparate cultures. Her narrative is polyphonic, thus giving insight into the point of views of several classes and cultures.

There is a dispersed pedagogical voice in the narrative that frames the tribes as insurgents and militants, the language of law, nation state and the rhetoric of development employed by the speakers of these voices. The narrative abounds in performative lived realities as well. The Santhal songs and phrases, the way they dance around the deceased corpse, their ululations arising out of the strength of their entire being, adds pluralistic flavours to the narrative. While the pedagogical is the abstract concept that establishes homogeneity, the performative is the concrete lived reality of the people which resists this presumed homogeneity in cultural encounters. Pedagogy is tied to the authority of the state, whereas the performative grants a special dispensation to the members of the cultures. It is in this realm of performativity that untranslatability germinates. In Devi's narration we see a blend of the two, a shift in levels of diction from conversational slangy Bangla to refined forms of Bangla as well as Santhali. While describing Arjan Singh's diabetes she tells that diabetes had twelve husbands one of them being anxiety, but the word that Devi uses for husband in Bangla is '*bhataar'* instead of '*bor*' or '*swami*' , which are terms used by the *bhadralok*. '*Bhataar*' is a slang which is normally used in a derogatory sense. While she asserts the individual performativity that ensures heterogeneity of discourses she also reminds the readers of a larger power at play that is absolute in nature. The heterogeneity of cultures and their discourses have to be curbed to create a stable picture of the homogeneous nation state. Devi is against this whole idea of homogenization and at one point in the story we find the narrator's voice saying, "not merely the Santhals but all the tribals of the Austro-Asiatic Munda tribes appear the same to the Special Forces" (Spivak 393). The Dossier's language and Senanayaka and Arjan Singh's dialogues all are charged with an overbearing sense of the *bhadralok*'s authority. They resemble the voice of the dominant intellectual who is entrusted with the job of ensuring the maintenance of this universality. On the other hand, to highlight the ever-growing desire to break free from this pedagogical narrative, she has meticulously crafted the hybrid languages spoken by Draupadi, the subordinate officials, and the incomprehensibility of Santhali and Mundari language. Comparing the two texts, i.e. the original text of Draupadi in Bangla and Spivak's translation in English, one would evidently notice elisions or the incapability of the target language to hold the variety and plurality of the vernacular. The differences between the source text and the target text can be categorised into, differences of elision or exclusion and differences of suppression. For instance the Bangla text opens with a description of Dopdi injured in the shoulder from a bullet wound, a detail that has been omitted in the English translation. This is denotative for her past encounters with the officials. It also pictures her as a vulnerable victim-rebel. Also there is an instance where the Devi mentions the Hindi song *Karwate badal hoga zamana*, a detail that Spivak's translation glosses over. After her rape, when she manages to recover her senses and is aware that she "has been made up", she says that then Senanayak would like her, which has been omitted from the translated version. Devi puns on the word 'like' here. It is the absolute power that he thinks he has exercised upon her and not her condition of multiple rapes that fascinated Senanayak. But instead of Senanayaka's stature being elevated to that of a powerful one, the contrary happens. Instead of liking her, Senanayak is terrified of her in the subsequent episode. His command to his men, "Make her. Do the needful", shows the misuse of power Senanayak indulges in to crush the indomitable spirit of a woman whose strength he is unaware and yet at the same time terrified of (Spivak 401). Senanayak anticipates this cruel act to be the final exhaustion of her spirit. But what is ironical is the unpredictable, untranslatable act of resistance portrayed by Dopdi which I shall discuss later in the paper.

Heteroglossia and Transclucence

Moving onto the differences of suppression in the two aforementioned texts, the English translation diminishes the irreducible heterogeneity of the various registers, dialects and hybrid languages used by Devi to a simple narrative polarizing into the conflict between Santhali and English. Referring back to the question of Damrosch's idea of the translator's choice. We can see that Spivak's translation is designed ideally to suit the debate of the centre versus the margin. Her translator's foreword fails to enlist these heterogeneous facets that are essential to Devi's craft. The readers are being prepared to read the text in line with the subaltern question. Devi's dialectical design suffers drastically as the target language is incapable of containing or expressing the subtle differences that indicate the class, caste, gender of the speakers. Also, in the English translation we fail to capture the power of languages as well as the languages of power. Elaborately speaking, there are several hierarchical languages at play: the national language superior to the regional which in turn can be found superior to the dialects and the registers. The significant use of Hindi words and phrases, the mention of Hindi songs and movies all these are indicate the growing popularity and cultural dominance of Hindi as a 'national' language, if we consider Jharkhani as a microcosm of the nation. Dopdi and her comrades speak in a Santhali intermixed with Bangla and Hindi, and the army officials who are in subordinate positions speak the colloquial dialects mostly spoken in villages. Even Chamru, the water bearer's encounter with the armed official results in a hybrid of Santhali and Bangla. Devi has used phrases such as "*lash nite koi nai aaya*" which is a hybrid sentence of Bangla and Hindi meaning, "no one came to claim the dead body". When she remembers Dulna she uses Hindi phrases to depict her strong determination not to reveal anything. "I swear by my life. By my life Dulna, by my life." which is in the source text as "*Jan Kasam, Jahan Kasam, Jankasam*". Senanayaka's usage of English and the words that Devi herself leaves untranslated in the Bangla text are often words that depict the power and domination that the state machinery asserts over the tribals who it considers to be its citizens. The state bureaucracy and army language employed here resembles that of the colonizer. The use of English words in legal notices and orders points to the administrative discourse of the colonizer continued in erstwhile colonised nations. The suppression of these aspects leads to a dichotomized representation of the tribal versus the state, the former resisting the latter and the latter inflicting violence and domination on the former and erases the linguistic multiplicity of vernacular discourses. Even the register used by Dopdi at the end, when she meets the Senanayaka after he has ordered his men to rape her, is that of a victim turned rebel. She is hardly submissive and the register indicates the disrespect and disgust she has for him. She addresses him as 'tui' which in Bangla is a pronoun used for some younger in age or someone who is unworthy of respect. Senanayaka is speechless at this incomprehensible act of a woman whom he thought to have defeated. These differences lead to the blurring of the dialectic between the power of language and the languages of power. The relationship between language and meaning is not politically neutral. It is reflected in the hierarchies of class, caste, gender, and marginal groups. In his book The Dialogic Imagination, Bakhtin talks of three categories of languages use; monoglossia, polyglossia and heteroglossia. Monoglossia refers to the single tongue that is representative of the national language, of which the language of the epic is an instance. Polyglossia is the existence of various tongues without one being in conflict with the other which is an abstract idea. In contrast to monoglossia and polyglossia, heteroglossia refers to the multiplicity of languages in conflict over privilege.

For Bakhtin, heteroglossia or the hierarchical existence of multiple languages or dialects is the lived reality. It is heteroglossia that is evident in Devi's meticulous craft. The national language tries to subordinate the regional which in turn dominates the dialects. The registers used by the characters are symbolic of their position in the power pyramid of state. The essential problem of translation is that language is considered to be a transparent medium that is a medium for the unproblematic transfer of meaning from source to target. What we overlook is the essentially intertwined nature of language, culture and meaning; that meaning does not exist outside of language but is rather constructed in the process of transfer of language across cultural difference. Language is not transparent, but rather a translucent medium that constructs the meanings it appears to express and this is linked to cultural signifiers of language. Taking into account these varieties that exist between not just different cultures but within one culture, opens up the possibility of several levels of untranslatability. They highlight the plurality of the idea of untranslatability or inexpressibility.

The Figure of the Female Militant

The most significant evidence of untranslatability in the story appears at the end when Dopdi willingly allows herself to be arrested so as to protect her comrades and is brutally tortured and raped by the officials. What appears as "apprehend" to the officials is in fact self-willingness. Dopdi is elevated to the status of a martyr from that of a rebel in this very episode. She could have easily disappeared into the jungle, which she knew so well and could have made the officials run all around the wilderness, but she would never enter the forest. She allows herself to be captured, and manages to send a message to the others to change their hideouts. She is portrayed as a tactful warrior who can predict the enemy's moves and act accordingly. Arjan Singh's words echo in her mind and she realizes that her absence would be sufficient to warn her comrades. She contemplates on how to send a message that would be invisible and incomprehensible to her enemies. After having issued the command to rape Dopdi, just at the moment when Senanayak is about to feel triumphant on having apprehended and 'made' Dopdi, and thinks she has reached the limit of her vulnerability, it is he who becomes vulnerable on seeing Dopdi walk naked in front of all the officials. Dopdi turns the table on him by performing an act so incomprehensible and unpredictable that everyone around her is terrified. What had been anticipated as a source of shame and disrespect becomes her pride and valour. She refuses to be objectified by Senanayaka and his men, and instead of being ashamed of her raped, mutilated body, she asserts her rightful subjectivity. In that untranslatable act of defiance, by refusing to cover herself, she is able to wrap around herself a language that is impenetrable to the Sahib sitting in front of her. As Helen Cixous calls out to those who "have been muffled throughout their history, they have lived in dreams, in muted bodies and silences and aphonic revolts", to become the "mistress of the signifier" (Cixous 13). Dopdi takes charge of her own signifiers, her agency lies in embracing the naked body of the feminine as a powerful weapon, which is otherwise objectified for sexual gratification. Dopdi was expected to be everything but fearless and defiant after the multiple rapes. Thus we see Devi's use of the conventional symbol of the 'naked feminine' to break the stereotypes about female nudity. The reason for Senanayak;'s dread on seeing Dopdi's raw nipples torn, pubic hair and thigh matted with blood, is because he does not want to view the female body as anything except an object for the gratification of sexual desires. Dopdi resembles the core of untranslatability

that denies absolute power to the process of translation. What Senanayak had perceived to be vulnerable and weak turned out to be the cause of his own dread. Senanayak is the translator who thinks he can fully understand the other. Senanayak had to accept the sense of provisionality, the impossibility of reaching a definitive version of the object he wanted to translate. Dopdi's resistance is akin to the perennial uncertainty of the untranslatable that stalls us and would continue to cast a shadow on the process of translation. Dopdi Mejhen even if apprehended, can never be comprehended. Senanayak's venture of "translating and transcribing" her will never be fulfilled.

Hierarchical Maze

There are certain drawbacks in claiming the struggle of the tribes in the Naxalite movement as purely an act of asserting their agency, and especially in claiming Dopdi to assert her female subjectivity. The valiant portrayal of Dopdi by Mahashweta Devi and her comradeship with her husband Dulna overshadow the gender discrimination and sexual violence perpetrated against women in militancy where the role of the female militant was often overshadowed by the arching male figures. Even if acknowledged, it was always seen as a wifely devotion or love for the male partner, thus parodying the whole idea of 'comradeship'. What Devi chooses not to bring to the fore in the narrative is the subjugated position of women within the movement that was hailed for being liberal and radical. The involvement of the middle class and elite *bhadralok* in the movement, those who claimed themselves to be revolutionary, also brings into question the actual agency of the tribals involved in the movement. The hierarchical order within the structure of the Naxalite movement itself, with mostly middle class mainstream *bhadraloks* being the stalwarts in the decision making process, questions the credibility of the movement. Were the tribals just being used as pawns by those who wanted to strengthen their anti-establishment stance?

Srila Roy in her article, "Revolutionary Marriage: On the Politics of Sexual Stories in Naxalbari", records her interviews with victims of sexual abuse and gender discrimination who have been silenced by the dominant forces of the groups. She talks of how these women achieve self-composure only by silencing and abjecting certain parts of their past. The abject as Kristeva notes is that part of the self that must be eliminated or suppressed but at the same time is essential for the construction of the self and keeps resurfacing time and again. Devi's account of Dopdi seems almost prophetic when read alongside the rape and murder of Thanjam Manorama in 2004. On 14th July, 2004, Thangjam Manorama's raped and mutilated body, pierced with bullets including her genitals was found. Semen stains on her dress confirmed by the forensic report suggested that she had been raped before her murder and possibly the gun shots in the genitals were to erase any evidence of rape. She was killed by the 17th Assam Rifles that is protected by the Armed Forces Special Power Act which in turn led to the outburst of resentment and rage throughout Mizoram. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958[2] states, " No prosecution, suit or other legal proceeding shall be instituted, except with the previous sanction of the Central Government, against any person in respect of anything done or purported to be done in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act", thus providing immunity to the officials posted under the Act. On 15th July, 2004 a group of women belonging to *Meira Paibi*, or the Torch Bearers marched to the Assam Rifles Headquarters, disrobing themselves naked and C Gyaneshori[3] was one of the women who took part in the protest. She told Human Rights Watch that:

> Manorama's killing broke our hearts. We had campaigned for the arrest memo to protect people from torture after arrest. Yet, it did not stop the soldiers from raping and killing her. They mutilated her body and shot her in the vagina. We mothers were weeping, 'Now our daughters can be raped. They can be subjected to such cruelty. Every girl is at risk.' We shed our clothes and stood before the army. We said, 'We mothers have come. Drink our blood. Eat our flesh. Maybe this way you can spare our daughters.' But nothing has been done to punish those soldiers. The women of Manipur were disrobed by AFSPA. We are still naked.[4]

The breach of human rights in the garb of state security is not a novel instance in the history of the North Eastern states. Savitribai and Kanhailal, members of the Kalashetra Manipur had been performing the story of Devi's Draupadi as a mode of resistance and protest to the brutality of the state forces. The only way to claim agency lies in the woman's accepting her feminine body: she has to break the shackles that have always made the female conscious and ashamed of her femininity. Whether it is Draupadi, or the mothers of Manipur marching naked towards their enemy, thus refusing to be considered defiled or dishonoured, we see the female asserting her rights through her body, that same naked feminine body that had been the subject of abjection and humiliation. Julia Kristeva in her book, *Powers of Horror* talks about the idea of abjection in relation to the figure of the naked feminine or the mother figure when she postulates her idea on the 'semiotic'. The semiotic for Kristeva is that stage when the mother and child are self-sufficient in a cocoon of their own. The child cannot distinguish itself from the mother and there is no spoken language between them. It is only when the child is required to step into the realm of the symbolic patriarchal language that must get rid of the mother. This premature separation of the mother from the child is according to Kristeva a state of abjection where the mother has to be gotten rid of but continues to resurface time and again in several forms such as dreams or nightmares. This is the essence of the semiotic: it is chaotic, unstructured, both capable of birth and destruction and contains immeasurable power that has the ability to dismantle the symbolic order.

From a structural point of view, untranslatability thus akin to the semiotic has the potential to disrupt the presumed coherence in the process of translation that thrives on equivalence of symbols across cultures. Translation is the order that cannot contain the elements of untranslatability and tries to erase the elements of plurality which form the essence of vernacular or indigenous discourses. Since the debate around world literature has commenced, it is time we look beyond the stereotypes of untranslatability as a mere obstacle in the process of translation and instead open up dialogue on the critique of the process of translation itself thus incorporating heterogeneity that breathes life into literatures of the world.

English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India

Notes

[1] Terai is the local word used for the Naxalbari region in Darjeeling district of West Bengal.
[2] The Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 http://nagapol.gov.in/PDF/The%20Armed%20Forces%20Special%20Powers%20Act%201958.pdf
[3] https://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/india0908/3.htm
[4] https://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/india0908/3.htm#_ftn81

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Women's Friendships as Sites of Resistance: A Study of Two 'Bombay Novels'

SREEJATA ROY

Abstract

Western Feminist studies have often conceptualized women's solidarity in terms of either sisterhood or lesbianism, thereby privileging institutionalized bonds or sexual ties over non-sexual, individual and volitional affective relationships like friendships. This paper attempts to argue that under patriarchy where there is little scope of women's self-identification except in relation to men, affective female homosocial ties like friendships which can slip through the frontiers of institutionalized or familial or any overtly political association can often transpire into sites of effective feminist resistance. This is especially significant where women's everyday lives are concerned in multicultural and politically contentious environments in Indian metropolitan cities like Mumbai. According to Heloise Brown and Graham Allan, socio-cultural approaches to women's friendships must take into account the historically and regionally-specific contexts in which they emerge as that would bear an influence on the dynamics of that friendship and by extension how far it enables the women involved therein to negotiate their way out or resist the specific patriarchy. Borrowing conceptualizations of literary portrayals of women's friendships by Elizabeth Abel and Judith K. Gardiner, this paper aims to explore the dynamics and possibilities of Indian women's friendships outside the conventional understanding of sisterhood, solidarity or lesbianism by undertaking a textual analysis of two 'Bombay novels': Thrity Umrigar's *The Space Between Us* (2005) and Sashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1993). Since the study takes a socio-cultural approach to women's friendships, this paper hopes to bring to light some of the ways in which women experience metropolitan urban locales in their everyday lives often from their domestic spaces itself and how such locales, in turn, influence their friendships.

Keywords: friendship, resistance, women, feminist, novel

Introduction

This paper aims to study the dynamics of inter-class friendships occurring between urban women to analyse their potential as sites of resistance and conviviality in their everyday-life through a reading two realist novels written by women of the same city: *The Binding Vine* (1993) by Shashi Deshpande and *The Space Between Us* (2006) by Thrity Umrigar. Under heteropatriarchy, where women's worth is still measured or validated through their relationships with men and their belonging to heteronormative families, friendships—either between women or between men and women become fascinating for the exploration of dynamics of possible subversion and resistance. Western Feminist studies have often conceptualized women's solidarity in terms of either sisterhood or

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lesbianism, thereby privileging institutionalized or familial bonds or sexual ties over non-sexual, individual and volitional affective relationships like friendships (Brown 191). A personal, informal and volitional tie like friendship is a peculiar bond inhabiting a shady space in the network of human relationships which can neither be defined nor be speculated on due to their volitional and non-institutional character. Their elusiveness arises from their mutability, or ability to overlap with other kinds of relationships. Probably this is the same reason why they go largely undocumented, taken for granted and usually inconsequential with regard to larger socio-cultural structures in which they are situated. They may be brief or fleeting or even short-lived encounters involving personal exchanges but they leave indelible marks on one or all of the participants.

Situating Women's Friendships in the City

Michel Foucault points out that "friendship is an important social formation as it signifies the possibility of functioning outside normative discourses, that are not easily possible within other relationships such as marriage or nuclear family." (Kathiravelu 15) Despite the agreed-upon general importance of friendship, women's friendships have often been trivialized and mocked and women have been portrayed as incapable of forming homosocial bonds as strong as men (Lips 210). Though some feminists have fought this assumption by showing that women's friendships can be deep and abiding, others like Pat O'Conner have warned against the essentialization of their friendships. (Brown 192).There is a need to account for the differential power dynamics existing in each friendship which recognizes the existence of conflicting feelings. Socio-cultural approaches to (women's) friendships tend to focus upon regionally or historically specific contexts which give rise to different forms of friendships. According to Graham Allan, "individuals do not generate their friendships in a social or economic vacuum, any more than they do it in a personal vacuum. Relationships have a broader basis than the dyad alone; they develop and endure within a wider complex of interacting influences which help to give each relationship its shape and structure." (Adams and Allan 2) This paper aims to highlight how these relationships or friendships in turn also have in them the potential to influence, affect or subvert the larger structures and hegemonies defined by caste, class and gender hierarchies. The central question that this paper aims to thereby raise through its reading of two fictional narratives is: If the resistance through politically conscious, strategic sisterhood based on commonalities of repressions has failed according to Bell Hooks (Hooks 43) due to the negligence of intersectional oppressions then can personal, affective and spontaneous bonds based on comparable experiences of oppression be more effective as a mode of resistance for women? In this context, it might be useful to refer to anthropologist Joan D. Koss-Chioino's concept of 'radical empathy' which creates in relationships "inter-subjective space where individuals, regardless of their prior relationships to one another, enter into intimate relation." (Caswell and Cifor 30) This paper intends to study whether friendships or relationships between women from different backgrounds can generate this sort of empathy for the 'other' that can effectively transform everyday friendships into viable sites of resistance.

The Bombay Novel

The study has taken two 'Bombay novels'. Mumbai is referred to as Bombay throughout the two novels take up for study here. Priyamvada Gopal, in *The Indian English Novel:*

Nation, History and Narration elaborates on what constitutes the 'Bombay novel' in the chapter 'Bombay and the Novel' (Gopal 116). The idea that Bombay novel forms a sub-genre of the Indian English novel comes from her and other scholars like Bill Ashcroft (specifically from his paper, 'Urbanity, Mobility and Bombay: Reading the Postcolonial City'). The reference uses 'Bombay' instead of Mumbai perhaps because the former harks to the city's shared origin with that of the Indian English novel, i.e. colonialism. The usage of the phrase in this study also indicates the specific patriarchy of the modern city which continuously impinges upon the lives of its women and affects the friendships, they form in it. Maryam Mirza in her book, 'Intimate Class Acts: Friendship and Desire in Indian and Pakistani Women's Fiction', negates the possibility of inter-class friendships or solidarity (Mirza). While not dismissing her conclusion, this paper views friendship as a journey, rather than an end. The impermanence or the flaws in the bonds should not overlook the instances of support that they did provide. While class and ethnicity come across as the barriers in the cases under consideration, friendships between similarly advantaged women are seldom perfect themselves, hence this reading focuses on the site of friendship and its possibilities for urban women in their everyday lives rather than the structural inhibitions to the same. Bombay/Mumbai forms an integral element in the works of both Thrity Umirgar and Sashi Deshpande. Both women focus on the lives of women from middle-class and lower-class Mumbai and the friendships they involuntarily end up forming via encounters necessitated and facilitated dynamics of the city itself. Paulina Palmer observes that there are two common approaches to women's friendships: political and psychoanalytical. While the former is concerned with bonding for overcoming patriarchy, the latter pays no attention to the political or collective aspects about relations between women, rather delve into the personal and psychological nuances of women's friendships, foregrounding their problems as well as their positive features (Hollinger 8). However, as the paper's analysis will portray, the two are often more intimately connected than previously thought to be, aligned with the feminist notion: 'the personal is political'[1]. When this idea is combined with Allan's approach, as mentioned earlier, through the socio-cultural context in which the friendship is taking place, then we come to the understanding that despite kyriarchy[2], personal bonds between individuals (women) and larger (in this case, urban) hegemonies are co-constitutive. Though this may bode a sense of the impossibility of meaningful resistive solidarities, it is also not without hope as friendship by nature is not always just transactional but also emotional and impulsive. It is because of its spontaneous, informal, and non- institutional nature that it can lend itself as potential sites of resistance for women.

Textual Analysis of the Selected Bombay Novels

Urmila in *The Binding Vine* and Sera in *The Space Between Us* lives are compulsorily centred around their marital families and their children not just because of structural or social barriers but also because of their own emotional entanglements with them. Friendship is a slippery tie, blending and merging into and with other ties and associations and both the novels have several instances of friendships and we find each of them gets complicated and strained due to the necessities of family ties, especially when the potential friendships emerge from antagonistic spheres or classes as is portrayed in the dynamics of the friendships between Shakutai and Urmila in Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* and that between Sera and Bhima in Umrigar's *The Space Between Us*.

Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* opens with Urmila, college-lecturer and mother of two, grieving the death of her infant daughter and suffering from loneliness due to her absent husband, Kishore who works in the merchant navy. (Deshpande) Around the same time, she accidentally comes upon a trunk containing her mother-in-law, Mira's diaries and poems while clearing the house. Not much later, at the hospital where Vanaa works, she comes across Shakuntala or Shakutai whose daughter Kalpana has been raped. Before she knows, Urmila finds herself get spontaneously entangled in the lives of Shakutai and Mira who she recovers through the perusal of her poetry. On reading Mira's poems and diaries, Urmila realizes that even Mira was a victim of rape before dying during childbirth at twenty-two. The only difference between her and Kalpana's experiences was that while the former was raped by her husband, within the protected and acceptable realm of a bourgeoisie marriage, *chawl*-resident Kalpana, hailing from a proletariat background, was raped by a yet-to-be recognized man. Urmila, the aggrieved mother, lonely wife, affable sister-in-law and benevolent employer is deeply moved by the words of her late mother-in-law, a painfully repressed talented poet and a victim of marital rape and by the plight of Shakutai and her near-dead daughter Kalpana who has been violated in a gruesome manner. She gets involved in the lives of Shakutai and Kalpana after this, at the expense of her familial obligations. But even before the drastic event of the rape, the fact that domestic workers in urban middle-class households often become more than mere physical assistants is adequately highlighted by both Deshpande and Umrigar.

Friendship, unlike family ties, is slippery, non-obligatory and noncommittal in nature. Therefore, it often becomes a site for authentic self-expression for its participants. For instance, early in *The Binding Vine*, when Urmila's marital family is trying to cope with the death of infant Anu, Urmila's mother, Inni cries out: "I've told you many times let's call Shanta back, even if there's no work for her at least I'll have someone to talk to. I know I'm a burden to you, but I'm helpless, I have no one." (Deshpande 69) It is interesting how Inni feels she has no one even though she lives with her family and daughter-in-law Urmila and her children and is often visited by her daughter Vanaa. The sense of alienation that modern cities are thought to evoke is seen to permeate into their domestic spaces inhabited by apparently functional families even in a cultural space like middle-class Bombay where filial ties are meant to dominate.

Another instance where friendship comes into tension with family ties is seen in the bond between Urmila and her childhood friend Vanaa who presently happens to be her sister-in-law. The protagonist-narrator comments on this directly when she is challenged by Inni who suspects that Urmila married Kishore to stay close to Vanaa:

> "...I didn't need to be related to Vanaa. In fact, by marrying Kishore, I distanced myself from her; as if she, as Kishore's sister, and I, as Kishore's wife, moved away from each other, Kishore coming between us. We've managed to bridge the gap by silence."(Deshpande 79)

Whereas earlier, in their youth, their close compatibility made people mistake them to be cousins or sisters. Here too the narrator negates their assumptions: "But there is a greater ease between us than there is between sisters or cousins. I've noticed a kind of tension between sisters..There is none of that between us." (Deshpande 79) This attests to the fact that it is not that women are not able to form strong homosocial bonds but that their friendships are often interrupted by patriarchy and their emotional and practical compulsion to ally with patrilineal and patriarchal family units which are in turn tied to class-caste networks defining the modern nation-state. The family versus friendship

tension gets more intense when Urmila goes out of her way to help Shakutai and Kalpana. It is also irrevocably strained when she expresses the desire to publish Mira's poems which implicate her father-in-law as a violent and abusive man. The latter decision comes towards the end after she witnesses the experiences of other women or friends. She does not, however, do any of this consciously, unlike her friend Priti who deliberately attempts to forge solidarities not out of sincere empathy but for self-gratification, labels, films to her name and awards. Being with Shakutai at the hospital or accompanying her to her slum-residence and giving her comfort and assistance is probably Urmila's way of coming to terms with the death of her Anu. But she sits and listens to Shakutai vent and reminiscence about her own life and tragedies. She herself is not fully clear about what makes her walk an extra mile for this family with who she has otherwise very little to do, especially when it comes in direct conflict with her own family's concerns.

The spontaneous aspect of the bond between Urmila and Shakutai is not unmarred by their different class positions. Despite their consciousness about their alarming differences, Shakutai and Urmila reach out to each other. But what is revealing in this dyad is that while Shakutai unveils almost everything about her personal life to Urmila, the latter listens and helps but does not unburden her sorrows or pains to Shakutai. She attempts to enlighten her about why Kalpana's rape is not a result of her own fault and is constantly by her side each time Shakutai breaks down inconsolably, but Urmila herself is starkly silent when it comes to her own marital woes or childhood traumas. She does not break down before Shakutai either. She does so before Vanaa and before Bhaskar. The narrator's unconscious class-bias makes her empathetic enough to reach out to Shakutai and lend her an ear but prevents her from coming to that level of intimacy with her at the same time. It could be questioned how far Urmila's empathy towards Shakuntala is an educated response of a conscious academician woman to the woes of a have-not. Once when Shakutai was busy showing her old photographs and talking about her life and relationships, the narrator says "The mother and daughter [Sandhya] exclaim and chatter over each photograph, I make appropriate comments". (Deshpande 145) This shows that despite her attempt to understand, she was unable to relate to Shakuntala's feelings and concerns as a lower class and poorly educated woman. Her attempt to educate and enlighten Shakutai about how she should reject the shame and accept her daughter and not blame her for being the survivor reaches a climactic point when she makes her report to the media about the event as a bid to protect her daughter ousted from the hospital to accommodate other patients. The media report generates public interest and reinvigorates its investigation but the uncomfortable truth it reveals about the identity of the rapist (who happens to be Shakutai's brother-in-law) shatters Shakutai as her sister, Sulu commits suicide. The sensationalizing media worsens matters for Kalpana and Shakuntala, but it also incites a public outcry against structural injustices. Urmila's experience with Kalpana and Shakutai makes her decide to publicize Mira's truth as well. Urmila justifies her stance to Vana in this way:

> "...Then I saw Kalpana and I met Shakutai, I read Mira's diary, her poems. And I've begun to think yes, I've managed, but I've been lucky, that's all. While these women…They never had the chance. It's not fair at all. And we can't go on pushing it –what happened to them –under the carpet forever because we're afraid of disgrace''(Deshpande 174)

It is not told what trajectories Kalpana and Shakutai's lives ultimately take, or whether Urmila ultimately follows through her decision of publishing Mira's poems even with Kishore disapproval of the same. But the friendship forged between Urmila and Shakutai,

two women from completely different backgrounds, open up possibilities for change and resistance and infuses meaning in the drab, alienating and otherwise purely transactional space of the city of Bombay.

Laavanya Kathiravelu in her paper 'Friendships and Urban Encounter' points out that though friendships is a private affiliation, it is a way in citizenship can be performed within a privatized home sphere, "where larger national solidarities become a part of an intimate zone" (Kathiravelu 13). This bears particular significance in the case of friendship-like intimacies that form between domestic-helps and their employers. The narrative of *The Space Between Us* goes back and forth in time to relate the events in the paradoxically intersecting and parallel lives of primarily two women, Sera and Bhima. (Umrigar) It opens with old lower-caste Bhima in her tiny slum-shelter, preparing herself to start for her work-place, which is Sera Dubash's upper-middle-class comfortable apartment in a nearby high-rise. Bhima stays with and take care or works for her orphan granddaughter Maya who, it is told at the very beginning, has been left pregnant by an undisclosed rapist. Bhima has been working for Sera Dubash for decades now and both are intimately involved with each other's lives going beyond the purely transactional nature of their employee-employer bond. This is partly due to the nature of the care-based work that Bhima does at Sera Dubash's household, work which women do as a labour of love by default in their own households: such as preparing breakfast for the family before and so that the members can leave for work on time, taking care of the young ones while the elders remain busy. what results is a long-standing bond between these two women who are often forced to choose between their familial ties and their unspoken loyalty for one another. "This is what Sera appreciates most about Bhima—this unspoken language, this intimacy that has developed between them over the years." (Umrigar 17)

Shakuntala's marriage in Deshpande's narrative had broken as her husband refused to work despite moving to the city, Bhima's husband Gopal, in Umrigar's novel, similarly opted out of the responsibility of taking care. So for Bhima, her only family, future and hope is her granddaughter Maya. But the novel opens with Bhima's bitterness at Maya because she perceives her as a traitor for getting herself pregnant before finishing college. On the other hand, Sera Dubash, confident, educated and professional middle-class Parsee hailing from a well-to-do scientist family married Feroz out of love and personal choice but found herself in a harrowingly abusive and violent marriage from which she could never escape until their complete separation as a coupled unit from the Dubash household and until the death of Feroz. For Sera, her hope, the reason for living and meaning of existence revolves around her daughter Dinaz. It is this commonality that binds Bhima and Sera as well as gets instrumental in separating them from each other. Having worked for Sera's household since the time when Sera was a new bride, Bhima has been a witness to many of her personal plights. There have been times in the past when:

> "the house felt like a tomblike, encased in silence, a silence that prevented her from reaching out to others, from sharing her darkest secret with even her closest friends. When Bhima was the only one who knew, the only one who felt the dampness of the pillowcase after long nights of shedding hot tears, the only one who heard the muffled sounds coming from her and Feroz's bedroom."(Umrigar 18)

The dynamics of their friendship is a complex one. It is interrupted or persuaded by not just by their loyalties to their own families but also the irreparable 'space between them', the differences in class and community keep impinging on their need to bond. This

manifests in everyday lives, for example when Viraf, Sera's son-in-law offers to buy a dishwasher for the household, Sera prevents it as she is concerned about their money being wasted on something that her well-paid Bhima can do anyway at a time when her daughter is expecting. The discrepancies in Sera's treatment towards Bhima does not go unnoticed by the latter. However Bhima's "sense of fair play and stout affection for the Dubash family takes over" as she recognizes the Sera's acts of patronizing charity like giving money for a cab ride or helping her with Maya's education and standing by them during this critical phase of Maya's pregnancy out of wedlock. These acts by themselves mean a great deal to a woman whose own family has deserted her. This is not just for the present calamitous news, but Sera and her daughter, Dinaz have been helpful and affectionate towards Bhima almost to a fault according to Feroz and their neighbours, some of whose prejudice, Sera herself shares. When young Dinaz consciously incites Bhima to ask for a raise in her wage, Sera rebukes her. On a day to day matters, the fact that Bhima resides in the filthy slum, without adequate running water or privacy causes a gaping divide between the two women. The divide reaches to the extent of near untouchability despite their emotional frankness to each other, Sera finds it difficult to allow Bhima to use their furniture:

> "The thought of Bhima sitting on the furniture repulses her. The thought makes her stiffen, the same way she had tensed the day she caught her daughter...giving Bhima an affectionate hug... [Sera] had to suppress the urge to order her daughter to go wash her hands." (Umrigar 29)

Much of this revulsion and Sera's compulsory alienation from Bhima is structural as it is personal. Even the little kindness that Sera shows to Bhima is often questioned and noted by her neighbours and friends and is criticized by her husband Feroz. Sera has to evoke the angry image of Feroz to check Dinaz from being what she perceives to be, excessively kind towards Bhima. Once when Dinaz shows her affection toward the more available Bhima than she does to her father, who is absent half the time for work, Feroz bellows:

> "That woman is brainwashing our only child under your very nose, and you are too complacent and stupid to even notice. Dinaz talks nicer to Bhima than she does to her own daddy" (Umrigar 68)

And yet it is this same outcaste and outsider Bhima who was the only one around to comfort Sera in her younger days when she used to be badly beaten and bruised by Feroz. She would make curative concoctions and apply on her wounds and gently massage her body into restive slumber. She was even sensitive enough to never to talk about them or refer to the cause of the wounds. Sera would return the favour by paying Bhima visits to her slum when the latter was ailing from typhoid fever and had nursed Bhima back to health by taking her to see their family doctor. Even as she brought Bhima from the slum to her own apartment during her fever, she could not be generous or egalitarian enough to offer her a bed to sleep on. Both Bhima and Maya had to sleep on the floor for the anxiety of their class-location creeps into their bond: "Each time she thought of the slum, she recoiled from Bhima's presence, as if the woman had come to embody everything that was repulsive about that place.." (Umrigar 115) Sera has been consistently helpful to Bhima about Maya's education and upbringing as well. When Maya is found to be pregnant, it is Sera and her family who gives her the assistance she needs to get the unwanted fetus hastily aborted. In several such instances, Bhima's friendship with upper-middle-class educated Sera enables her to be the beneficiary of those rights and services (like quality education and healthcare and relevant information) which should be available to all citizens of the country.

Despite the egalitarian potential of their bond, it is far from being sincerely emancipatory. Outwardly Sera's assistance to Bhima's granddaughter to get safe abortion seems benevolent. But at a time when her daughter is happily pregnant, Sera lacks the empathy to understand the loss that Maya, herself feels in the process. Right from Feroz's death to Dinaz's pregnancy, Sera has Bhima to take care of her and offer her a quiet companionship and conduit for the former's wellbeing. Bhima also feels indebted to Sera for the countless number of times, she tried to help her, even if the attempts are infused with problematic feelings. This innate sense of gratitude along with the fear of being disbelieved prevents Bhima from going all out with the terrible truth that she uncovers about the real cause behind Maya's pregnancy to Sera and her family. Even as it burns her insides, she cannot confide in Sera that it is her own respectable and beloved son-in-law, husband of her only daughter who is responsible for the rape that has resulted into Maya's pregnancy which they had to get aborted. Maya makes a vitally revealing comment on the relationship between Bhima and Sera when she is scolded for the umpteenth time for appearing to be ungratefully rude towards Sera: "...My parents were sending me to school in Delhi. Serabai just wanted to believe I was a dum-dum she could save. And as for my clothes and food – for that, I'm grateful to you, not to her. It is your sweat and hard work that produce them, not Serabai's generosity. If you stopped going to work for a month, let us see if she would send you your salary in the mail." (Umrigar 269)

Sera and Bhima's bond has the potential for solidarity based on a quiet understanding. Sera spontaneously reads Bhima's dark thoughts and observes: "I know what you mean, but Bhima we women, we live for so much more than just ourselves. You for Maya, I for Dinaz and, now the new baby...women don't live for themselves..."(Umrigar 296) However, whatever potential this bond had, either of resistance or solidarity is cruelly and expectedly aborted by familial affiliations and deceptions. After Viraaf, Sera's son-in-law finds out that Bhima knows about his crime, he hatches a plan to portray her as a thief, which provokes her to the extreme extent of calling him out for his vileness. When confronted with the terrible truth which threatens to end her daughter's apparently happy marriage, and egged on by Viraf's manipulative assertions, Sera sides with Viraf and dismisses Bhima from her service, and in effect from the long-standing 'friendship'.

Conclusion

What is seen in these two novels is that though not always enduring or without problems, these friendships forged in an urban milieu of Bombay enable the women to survive and go on in different ways, in various stages of their lives. Sometimes they can also generate larger movements of resistance and visibility as is seen in *The Binding Vine*. At other times, as in *The Space Between Us*, even when they fail to culminate into meaningful space for resistance, they prove themselves to be potentially subversive and potent enough to demand attention and machination of the traditionally more secure filial relations to abort them. Therefore affective associations like friendships help to locate the agency of resistance in individual women themselves through whatever means that are accessible to them as fundamental structural changes may take lifetimes of struggle.

Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata

Notes

[1] The personal is political' is also termed as 'the private is political' first appeared as the title of Carol Hanisch's essay published in 'Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation'. Hanisch herself credited editors, Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt for the formulation. This became a rallying cry for feminists later to emphasize what the essay too highlighted: "personal problems [issues] are political problems'' (Gupta, Open Democracy: Free Thinking for the World)

[2] Kyriarchy', conceptualized by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, describes a system of "interlocking structures of domination" that is not based on just gender but other intersectional categories like class, race, ethnicity, colour, caste etc. (Osborne 11)

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The Spatial Imperative: The Need to Read Space in Salman Rushdie's Novels

YUYING LIANG

Abstract

Spaces constructed in Salman Rushdie's novels have become a special focus for critics to contextualize the representations of space as an important dimension of perceiving and understanding the contemporary world and of creating new meanings in social life, as an echo to the spatial turn in literary and cultural studies, and in particular to the deterioration of the living space of human beings in the modern world. Interrogating the significances of space and spatiality in Rushdie's novels can be carried out based on such formulations of spatial concepts as social space by Henri Lefebvre, Thirdspace by Edward W. Soja, heterotopia by Michel Foucault, walking as a means of resistance by Michel de Certeau, spaces as scapes by Arjun Appadurai, liminal space and hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha, chronotope by Mikhail M. Bakhtin, etc. This interdisciplinary approach to spatial inquiry, combined with insightful spatial theories, helps better understand how imperative it is to read space in Salman Rushdie's novels, and helps expand spatial thinking more broadly and intensively to embrace sociopolitical, sociocultural, sociohistorical, sociolinguistic or more diversified perspectives, specifically to connect space with the workings of power, ideology and discipline, and in relation to phenomena such as social exclusion, marginalization, alienation, hybridization, resistance, etc., paradigms taken into consideration in colonial and postcolonial critiques. This paper aims to bring forth some constructive insights in its own ways to look into the spatial configurations of contemporary world, hoping to shed light on the tensions of competing for spaces that currently prevalent across the globe.

Keywords: space, spatial reading, spatial imperative, Salman Rushdie, novels

Epistemologically, space and time have been known as two essential dimensions for humans to perceive knowledge and to acquire a picture of the world. Philosophically, space and time are the two fundamental existing forms of matter, the coordinates of objects. However, with the rise of historicism under modern capitalism, space was compelled to steadily make way for time in the modern consciousness, a phenomenon that brings out the notion of time-space compression during the industrial revolution. Historical thought linearized time and peripheralized space by positing the existence of degrees of temporal progress, an attempt to define the past as a chain of progressive, inexorable events advancing to the present. Yet, since the late twentieth century, human geography has undergone a profound transformation conceptually and methodologically and gradually developed into one of the most influential, innovative and dynamic fields of the humanities and social sciences. With the revival of scholarship in geography, the

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reassertion of space has increasingly become a tendency in modern consciousness and scholars in several disciplines tend to take space as a dramatic new means to analyse their own areas, a phenomenon that corresponds to the concomitant recognition that space is every bit as important as time in the construction and transformation of social life. A seminal essay by Michel Foucault declares that, "In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time." (Foucault and Miskowiec) Increasingly, the shift has come to embrace much broader transformations in the economy, politics and culture of the contemporary world and also entails a profound transformation in human identity and subjectivity, all of which helps to offer a richer and more contextualized understanding of the different histories of human subjects, the construction of human relations, the production of cultural phenomena, etc. The spatial turn in literature and cultural studies was advanced by Michel Foucault who pointed out that while space had been substituted for time as an emerging category of analysis, thinking space has to become the primary category for critical analysis in the areas of literary and cultural studies.

As an important contemporary British Indian writer and a representative figure in post-colonial literature, Salman Rushdie sets themes of his writings on nationalism, multiculturalism, dualism, migration, exile, diaspora, etc., and the formulations of motifs on the immigration experience, cultural clash, identity crisis and hybridity reflects Rushdie's own experience of and contemplation on the identity problems of South Asian immigrants in the West. Rushdie represents a variety of places to dramatically map human living conditions in the contemporary world in his fiction – places like Jahilia, Sikri, Florence, Bombay, Karachi, London, New York, Los Angeles, etc. These places function as essential elements in Rushdie's artistic oeuvre and have recently attracted critical attention from some scholars who have taken in new sources drawing from the emerging interdisciplinary scholarship on space. Building on the new insights provided by the spatial turn in the humanities, this paper proposes a 'spatial imperative', the absolute need to look at various kinds of spaces constructed in Rushdie's novels, especially in *Midnight's Children* (1981), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), and *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008).

Taking an interdisciplinary approach and building upon theories brought forth by spatial thinkers like Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Edward Soja, Michel de Certeau and Arjun Appadurai, Homi K. Bhabha, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, etc., this paper seeks to make new understandings of the construction of space in Rushdie's fiction. Accordingly, it proposes that the following points need to be looked into to scrutinize how Salman Rushdie represents space in his novels. Firstly, how space is dealt with, not as abstraction from above, but as a lived negotiation, where through one's own lived body, one interacts with space, lives space, experiences space to construct that space, as elaborated in Michel de Certeau's theorization of walking in the city. Secondly, these lived spaces in Salman Rushdie's novels are often other/othered spaces, spaces that lie outside social norms, spaces of marginalization, of incarceration, as stated in Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia. Thirdly, the normative space and the other/othered space are in Salman Rushdie's novels not two spaces that do not intersect, but are spaces that have in between them interstitial spaces, liminal spaces, where there is hybridization and negotiation, much like Edward Soja's and Homi Bhabha's theories of Thirdspace. Fourthly, in these negotiations, in the thirdspace, the immigrant subjects in Salman Rushdie's novels generate representations of these spaces as scapes, like in Arjun Appadurai's theorization of how immigrant diasporic communities negotiate space as scapes. Fifthly, this is how space is produced

in Salman Rushdie's novels, not as a fixed entity, but as something that is socially produced, as in Henri Lefebvre's theory of the same. Lastly, that how the configurations of time and space are represented in language and literature serves as a means to define genre and generic distinctions in literary criticism, as elaborated in the term chronotope by Mikhail M. Bakhtin in his seminal essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel". What's more, in the literary artistic expressions, the chronotope also shows how different literary genres employ different configurations of time and space, which endows each genre with its particular narrative character.

To sum up these theoretical concerns, the need that this paper articulates is for an exploration into the following questions in Salman Rushdie's novels. How is space socially produced in them, as observable in the light of Henri Lefebvre's idea of social production of space? How is space constructed and endowed with new meanings in these novels through the characters' interactions with the places where they carry out their own businesses, as analyzed from the perspective of Michel de Certeau's theorization of "Walking in the City"? How is other/othered space produced in these texts, which is seen not to follow the normal social norms, but conversely transgresses the dominant rules of games, as considered in view of Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia? How is marginalized space produced in these novels, as opposed to dominant and central space, as drawn from Edward Soja's and Homi Bhabha's theoretical postulations of Thirdspace? And finally, how is liminal space produced in them to enable hybridity to flourish in immigrant diasporic communities, as echoed in Arjun Appadurai's theoretical thinking of space in his writings?

Literary criticism has a century-long history of approaching the spatial turn as an important perspective in the investigation and exploration of literary texts. Since geography became the basis of the narrative form in the late nineteenth century, scholars have tended to focus on the social and imaginary elements of space in their studies. David Harvey and Henry Lefebvre inject social theory, specifically Marxism, into the re-evaluation of space and spatiality in social thought in their foundational works. The 1980s witnessed strong Marxist influence in literary studies of space. Edward Soja in his work *Postmodern Geographies* emphasized that delving into spatial relations can shed new light on the complexity and materiality which are hidden in narratives. Foucauldian and Marxist scholars argue that human experience of space is always mediated by human relations with the world, a view that emphasizes the materiality of space which was often experienced by humans temporally through a set of beliefs and practices. Edward Said's theorizations have influenced broad fields of spatial scholarship by offering a fundamental way for scholars to think geographic otherness historically. In his theoretical conception, Said also brings forth the mapping strategy which constitutes forces of oppression on the colony, the post-colony and the so-called developing world. It was Doreen Massey who initiated the possibility of a gendered study of space. She gives definitions to time and space as masculine and feminine respectively. The way in which she thinks of space and gender and of space-time in literary studies aims to reveal that temporal experiences of humans are centrally and inescapably implicated in human understandings of space. She notes that meaning was constantly constructed and renegotiated out of the contestatory interrelationships of time-space, and places were part of those meanings. Spatial literary studies have been primarily concerned with issues related to how literature helps to understand space which is taken as setting to unfold the plot, how literature helps to shape the understanding of space, and more importantly how it helps to construct new understandings through its intervention in culture.

This paper suggests, in following this spatial turn in literary criticism, that there is a need to foreground the significance of space as playing a pivotal role in Rushdie's novels. The need is to practically interpret how Rushdie represents a plethora of varying and changing spaces in his narratives. The need is to contextualize Rushdie's representations of different kinds of spaces and to show how he depicts the interactions between his characters and the spaces in which they play out their roles. As Rushdie represents various spaces explicitly and implicitly in his fictional writing, which act as indispensable settings for his characters to unfold their stories, by approaching an interdisciplinary spatial theoretical apparatus drawing on the key theoretical postulations on the field by different spatial thinkers from a variety of disciplines that range from geography to urban sociology, from literature to cultural studies as methodology, this paper proposes to offer the absolute necessity for a multidisciplinary and multi-dimensional overview on the social cultural construction of spaces and their special significance in Rushdie's novels.

It may be worthwhile to first signpost some important theoretical concepts mentioned earlier in understanding space. The term 'heterotopia' was coined by the French thinker Michel Foucault. Etymologically, the prefix hetero- is derived from ancient Greek heteros which means other, another, different, and is combined with the Greek morpheme topos which carries the meaning of place. As such, heterotopia means 'other place'. Foucault outlined the notion of heterotopia on three occasions between 1966-1967: first, in the preface to his book *The Order of Things*: published in 1966; second, in a radio talk functioned as part of a series on the theme of utopia and literature; and finally in a better-known lecture presented to a group of architects in Paris in March 1967, which is regarded as the most well-known explanation of the term. The published lecture, "Des Espaces Autres", has been translated into English twice: the first is entitled "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", while the second as "Different Spaces". In Foucault's elaboration, heterotopia refers to places such as ships, cemeteries, brothels, prisons, asylums, gardens of antiquity, holiday villages, Turkish baths, and many more. Foucault illustrates many possible types of heterotopic places or spaces, to be classified as follows: heterotopia of crisis like boarding schools or motel rooms; heterotopia of deviation, for example, institutions like hospitals, asylums, prisons, rest houses, cemeteries, within which individuals whose behaviours do not follow the normal social norms or rules are placed; heterotopia as gardens which are basically real places and juxtapose many layers of different spaces; heterotopia of ritual or purification like saunas or hammams which are isolated and penetrable yet not freely accessible; heterotopia of illusion; and heterotopia of compensation. The concept of heterotopia also appears in the research of many other scholars who use the term in a postmodernist context to understand the emergence of differences in terms of culture, society, politics and economy, and of identity and identification, which are taken as central issues in larger multicultural cities. Theorists like David Harvey convey interests in the matter of class domination as the central determinant of social heteronomy. Edward Soja focuses on the concept to examine urban spaces in writing his monumental work *Thirdspace*, through having a dialogue with the works of Henri Lefebvre.

Originally published in French in 1980 and translated into English in 1984, Michel de Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday Life* has played an important role in the field of cultural studies, as well as in the intersecting fields of cultural geography and urban studies. In particular, his chapter on "Walking in the City" has shed light on understanding some key terms such as power, body-subject relations, urban practices, resistance, and

the like. More importantly, the theoretical reflections concentrated around "Walking in the City" have offered new kinds of theoretical frameworks for understanding the temporal and spatial operations of popular culture in recent years. As de Certeau argues, to understand urban life is not to stand on the top of the tallest building, out of the city's grasp, and to look down at the objective totality of the city, like the way in which cartographers use in map-making. But rather, de Certeau prefers, as he asserts, walking in the city instead of viewing it. He argues that walking in the city has its own rhetoric. As the pedestrians of the city move about and write their experience of subjective use of the urban space, walking as an act of enunciation constitutes a sort of language which speaks about the city and takes part in creating its meanings. While walking in the city in his own style as a mode of understanding the urban space, the pedestrian brings new meanings to places and streets which are not the same as those they are already imbued with.

Henri Lefebvre dedicated a great deal of his philosophical writings to discussing the importance of the production of space, in particular that of the social production of social space. His book *The Production of Space* (1974) is often cited as a blueprint for understanding key terms in the spatial studies repertoire such as spatialization, spatiality, domination, power. In this work Henri Lefebvre introduces the concept of the social production of social space. Lefebvre holds that there are different modes of production of space in what he calls spatialization. In his elaboration of the term spatialization, Lefebvre contends that from natural space to more complex spaces the meanings are produced in a social way. Lefebvre's central argument in *The Production of Space* is about the social production of social space. Specifically, space is socially produced, a social product that is extremely a complex social construction which inevitably affects the modes of spatial practices and perceptions. It is worth noting that in the course of his analysis Lefebvre's concerns shift from the production in the space to the production of the space. Lefebvre's discussion encompasses a variety of and a multiplicity of spaces that are socially produced and made productive in social practices, and his focus is on the contradictory, the conflictual and ultimately the political character of the processes of production of space. Moreover, as Lefebvre suggests, space can be understood not only as a concrete, material object, but also as an ideological, lived and subjective one.

Known as one of the world's leading spatial theorists, Edward Soja has been recognized for having made great contribution to spatial theory and to the field of cultural geography. In reading of Henri Lefebvre's social production of social space and Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, and at the same time synthesizing these theories with the work of postcolonial thinkers such as Gayatri Chakravotry Spivak, bell hooks, Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, Soja develops a theory of Thirdspace and conceptualizes it within the social sciences and from the perspective of critical urban theory. In addition, Soja constructs his own concept of spatial trialectics as spatiality-historicality-sociality in dialogue with Henri Lefebvre's concept of a spatial triad which is expressed as spatial practice, representations of space and space of representations. Soja defines Thirdspace as an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life. As Soja put it, in his Thirdspace everything comes together – subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, and much more – which reveals the binary opposition of the existence in space, and significantly, thirding is the point that Soja is dedicated to focusing on. Soja asserts that Thirdspace is a radically inclusive concept which embraces epistemology, ontology and historicity and which is in continuous movement, aiming to go beyond dualism and move toward an-Other. It is in

this light that, according to Soja, the thirdpsace produces the so-called cumulative trialectics which is radically open to additional otherness, to a continuous expansion of spatial knowledge. Soja goes further to claim that thirdpsace is such an extraordinary conception that it is in ceaseless expansion to include the an-Other, making possible the contention and re-negotiation of boundaries and cultural identity. In this way Soja closely resembles Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space Theory. In Bhabha's formulation, the Third Space Theory is a postcolonial socio-linguistic theory as related to identity and community, and achieved by means of language or education. The theory is used to expound the peculiar characteristics of every individual, actor or context which is in the state of hybridity. Bhabha explains that in the third space all forms of cultural hybridity flourish, a movement that tends to take the place of the history that constitutes it and ultimately gives rise to new structures of authority, new political forms. And more significantly, along with the flourishing of cultural hybridity, there is generated a series of things that appear to be different, new and unrecognizable, which constitute a new area for the negotiation of meaning and representation.

In his famous article "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", Arjun Appadurai argues that the central problem of current globalization is the tension between homogenization and heterogenization in terms of culture. Appadurai relates the argument of homogenization caused by globalization to the argument about Americanization or commoditization, and more often than not the two arguments are closely linked to one another. Appadurai points out that what has not been taken into consideration is that the various cultural elements which have been brought into new society from different metropolises under the drive of globalization would be indigenized to the local culture in one way or another. Appadurai goes on to claim that the complexity of modern day global economy is inevitably connected with the disjuncture of these three sections: economy, culture and politics. He addresses these phenomena by theorizing them with the aid of five conceptual dimensions, in Appadurai's word five 'scapes', of global culture: they are ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes. Appadurai explains that the common suffix 'scape' is used to indicate the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes which deeply characterize international capital. The term ethnoscape is meant to illustrate the moving groups of peoples consisting of tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, etc., who constitute a shifting world. In the term technoscape, Appadurai means that the global configuration of technology which is in an ever fluid state, moves at radically high speeds across various previously impenetrable boundaries. By financescape, Appadurai refers to the disposition of global capital which is developing at rapid speed and becoming increasingly mysterious and a difficult landscape to follow. Mediascapes are the representations of parts of reality which tend to be image-centered and narrative-based. Ideoscapes consist of various kinds of images which go directly to the political and most often are tied with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements intended to capture state power or parts of it. Appadurai points out that the growing movement of these scapes globally is to be carried out with the growing deep disjuncture among them. The flow of people, technology, funds, media and ideas is happening in changing and conflicting forms. According to Appadurai, one of the prominent features of this phenomenon is the state of deterritorialization.

The idea of space, as specifically articulated in Salman Rushdie's novels, has also been studied by many scholars. The article "The Production of Alternative Spaces: Walking in the City in Salman Rushdie's Novels" by Madhumita Roy and Anjali Gera Roy aims to

examine how alternative global spaces are produced in Rushdie's novels. It takes de Certeau's "Walking in the City" as its theoretical ground. Based on de Certeau's assertion that walking should be taken as a mode of resistance, the article claims that Rushdie in his fiction also uses the trope of walking in the city as an altered act of resistance. In accordance with de Certeau's theory, which brings forth the concept of a modified walker who obscures the distinction between the subject and the object and intensifies an inclusive approach to the construction of otherness in the pursuit of self-fashioning, the article presents walking as an exercise in Rushdie's writings, serving to deconstruct the autonomous bodies of walkers in their encounter with new experiences of physical cities, and argues that this is in line with post-anthropocentric discourses of walking. The article ends with the argument that the fracturing of the autonomous bodies of walkers results from a modified body politics and is connected to immigrants from the Global South, instead of the walkers of the Global North.

Cristina Sandru's paper "Words and Worlds: The Heterotopian Spaces of Rushdie's Fiction" examines the role of art and imagination in Rushdie's fiction as the potential and exclusive realm in which the third in-between space can be expressed and negotiated. The paper, taking as the objects of analysis three of Rushdie's novels – *Midnight's Children*, *The Ground beneath Her Feet*, and *Fury* – aims to unveil how Rushdie, in his writing of fiction, mimicks fashionable and critical discourses in order either to subvert them or to surpass their trite nature to reveal the potential of a renewed imagination. The argument mainly focuses on the heterotopian spaces of contemporary production, with an attempt to trace the master trope used for suggesting new cultural conditions which function as a potent metaphorical presence in Rushdie's novels, helping to construct the figurative language of the urban space in different ways. It argues that the alternative imaginative space plays out a variety of forms from one novel to the other, which corresponds to Rushdie's unconventional fictional narratives ranging from concerns about historical memory in *Midnight's Children* to sinuous workings of the culture industry in *The Ground beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*. As its title hints, the paper emphasizes the figurative language pervasive in Rushdie's fictional creations and the tropological worlds he creates by dint of his language.

Indrani Datta's paper "About 'Hybrid' Identities and Interstitial Spaces: A Reading of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Enchantress of Florence*" takes Rushdie's novels as case studies to explore into the possibilities of developing an alternate critical discourse relevant to post-independence Indian writing in English by diasporic authors. By quoting Rushdie's statement "the broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one supposedly unflawed", the paper argues that Indian literature by diasporic writers are as real and significant as those written by Indian writers at home. It also claims that Rushdie's viewpoint offers an interesting alternative to the existing definitions of Indian writing in English by diasporic authors. Its argument is primarily concerned with the context of displacement, dislocation and transnationalization of cultures, with a focus on Rushdie's representative works which sketch a new world geography and re-evaluate national and cultural identity. Through an in-depth critical reading of the two novels, it observes that Rushdie's portrayal of the self-fashioning of the protagonists of the novels contributes to the formation of hybridity and shows a new trajectory which poses a challenge to the traditional definitions of identity passed down from the nation state. The paper also points out that Rushdie's narrative presents a unique space in which dialogues between cultures, nations and their peoples can be carried on and achieve possible outcome with a certain critical vibrancy and insight.

Based on the theory of domestic space, Sara Upstone in her article "Domesticity in Magical-Realist Postcolonial Fiction: Reversals of Representation in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*" notes that the traditional patriarchal division of public and private spheres gives rise to the colonial discourse in contemporary critical analysis which stresses on the representation of private and public space as of intimacy and exposure respectively. Upstone continues to argue that a critical awareness helps to illustrate that colonialism cannot be understood only in terms of public structures such as the nation or the city, but must also take into consideration the functions of the private lives of both the colonizer and the colonized in its construction. Her argument mainly focuses on representation of domestic space – a concept which is associated with specific spaces such as the home. Upstone is interested in distinguishing colonial representations of the home from that in postcolonial discourses. She holds that colonial discourse analysis usually reads home as a site of power contestation, while postcolonial critics focus on home as a site of resistance with a radical political dimension. Following a comprehensive theoretical discussion, Upstone uses Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* to indicate postcolonial authors' concerns with the principles of spatiality, issues related to the domestic space and their implications in the colonial context. Through a close reading of Rushdie's novels combined with the theory of domestic sphere, Upstone brings forth the idea of home metaphorically in the postcolonial novels' focus which is at the same time distinguished from the colonial home, while also suggesting two opposing representations of domestic space: the dwelling of the postcolonial novels and the home as a force of colonization.

In his paper "Changing Spaces: Salman Rushdie's Mapping of Post-Colonial Territories", Frederic Tygstrup focuses on the settings of Rushdie's novels. Tygstrup states that as a true representative of postcolonial literature, Rushdie in his fiction deals with both national and international themes, and the settings in his novels span across a variety of places ranging from his homeland in the subcontinent, such as India, Kashmir, Pakistan and Bangladesh, to locations outside Asia like England, USA or South America. As such, Tygstrup asserts that the vast space embedded in Rushdie's writings to some extent manifests the predicaments of intensified global exchange. Based on Rushdie's favourite themes such as multiculturalism, migration, exile, diaspora, etc., Tygstrup is interested in exploring the encounters of the immigrant figures when they are caught up in between different social and cultural settings, between the roots and the ramifications of different historical genealogies. Tygstrup attempts to map the territorial structure, human space and life form resulted by the forces of immigration which is presented as the bodily presence of the migrant characters. His argument is primarily concerned with the interactions between the immigrants' lives and the spaces they live in. Tygstrup suggests that the lives of the immigrants which unfold in the new spaces would inevitably undergo radical change, and meanwhile the spaces in which the histories of the migrants' lives take place would have been changed substantially as well, in the process of the self-fashioning of the immigrants.

It has been observed that Salman Rushdie involves a number of real cities in his fictional creation, such as Jahilia, Sikri, Florence, Bombay, Karachi, London, New York and Los Angeles. In so doing, Rushdie intends to unveil the contemporary urban condition so as to offer a perspective for the understanding of the contemporary global situation. This is exactly the significance of the cities in Rushdie's artistic oeuvre. Even though cities play a critical role in Rushdie's works, till recently they have not yet drawn sufficient attention in literary studies. To address this lacuna, Madhumita Roy, in her paper "Rethinking the

Global Urban Space in Salman Rushdie's Novels", takes into account the cities in Rushdie's novels and aims to uncover an alternative global space in them, through approaching emerging interdisciplinary research on cities, and taking references from the multidisciplinary spatial turn in humanities and social sciences. Drawing on copious spatial theories from key spatial thinkers like Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, Dorren Massey, Pierre Nora, Michel de Certeau, Nigel Thrift, Rosi Braidotti, the paper aims at rethinking the notion of global cities as strategic territories by practically interpreting Rushdie's texts. Accordingly, Roy presents her postulations in two ways. Firstly, building on Edward Soja's concept of synekism and combining it with Saskia Sassen's concept of the global city, Roy in her analysis adopts a diachronic perspective on globalization in Rushdie's novels. Secondly, her argument, by taking reference from the criticism of twenty-first century global cities in Rushdie's fiction, focuses on the new understanding of cities of the global south and the alternative cities constructed out of cities in the global north through unprecedented volumes of postcolonial migration, which in Roy's own expression, is from the city to the domestic sphere – that frequently refers to the home, and even to the micro level of the body.

The paper "Enabling Spaces and the Architecture of Hybridity in Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence*" by Nicole Weickgenannt Thiara begins its analysis with an emphasis on the special significance of Mughal India, in particular the Mughal ruler Akbar's reign, which is described in Indian historiography as an important historical period during which cultural intermingling had been in full swing. Based on the fact that Rushdie set his novel *The Enchantress of Florence* in Emperor Akbar's reign in sixteenth-century India and Akbar's city Fatehpur Sikri plays a pivotal role in the story, Thiara's debate is associated with such concepts as hybridity, space, architecture, etc., which are implicated in Rushdie's narrative. Her central argument actually focuses on how Rushdie portrays the mutually constituting relationship between cultural hybridity and the spaces which provide such hybridity an arena to unfold. Thiara particularly suggests that the term hybridity involved in her analysis be a malleable and open concept so that all forms of cultural intermingling can be encompassed. Her interpretation draws on elements of Mughal architecture and aesthetics which are represented in the narrative style and structure of the novel to show how these spatial models offer a perspective for Rushdie to explore a new form of hybridity which is also called Mughal hybridity in Thiara's words and which is very different from the hybridity Rushdie proposed in his earlier works. To be specific, Thiara asserts that Mughal synthesis is ascribed as an elite endeavor to be represented as a more considered and planned hybridity while the hybridity he championed in his earlier novels is an experiment with unruly, chaotic and vibrant nature. In the final section, the paper analyzes the gendered implications of the spatial design of the novel, with a clear reference to an enabling space constructed by the female character Qara Koz. Thiara argues that Rushdie's representations of certain places, in particular Fatehpur Sikri, transform these places into spaces which enable the encounter of cultures and the mixing and fusion of cultural traditions.

The exploration of the concept of home lies at the heart of the analysis in the article "Home as the Unhomely in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*" by Dilek Ozturk-Yagci. In the first place the author looks into the changing roles of the notion of home within contexts related to postcolonial theory, diaspora, multiculturalism and nationalism. Ozturk-Yagci's claim indicates that over the years the word 'home' has undergone a number of changes and has become a term that does not respond to its traditional roles

as shelter, safety, security, support, peace, belonging, but has received more negative implications as a site of dissolution, danger, fear, exclusion, interference, etc. Drawing theoretical strengths from key theoreticians of post-colonial studies, Ozturk-Yagci explores issues related to the changes exemplified in *Midnight's Children*, in particular the revisions that the term 'home' undergoes. Such variances, as she argues, indicate that the reference of the word has shifted from its traditional connotations as located, fixed, safe, shielded, stable to become open to more diverse and dynamic sense as fluid and subversive. Her assertion that the word 'home' in its narrowest sense refers to the private domestic sphere while in its most intrinsic engagement it is referred to in its relation to the public, the nation and the empire serves to elevate her concern of home from the interpersonal family level to the level of power struggles at the national communal stage. In this sense home is taken as a place from which the characters perform their roles while expecting to navigate with smoothness and ease around the colonial and postcolonial situation in their own ways. Considered in the light of such views, she aims to suggest that home in *Midnight's Children* serves as a promising site challenging the colonial power, a site of resistance, a place for power manifestation, but also at times a spot for disillusionment, as what is presented as home finally turns out to be unhomely. It further becomes a place where the characters through daily practices within the domestic space assert their identity and call for the manifestation of their subjecthood while at the same time attempting to subvert both the patriarchy of the familial and the tyranny colonial at their unhomely home.

Thus, a substantial number of scholars have studied the construction of space in Rushdie's novels, and they probe from different perspectives into the spatial representations which Rushdie embeds in his fictional writing. These analyses revolve around such key words as alternative, heterotopian, interstitial, liminal, urban, hybridity, home, unhomely, resistance, etc., to interpret the formation in the novelistic spaces spatial practices which have varying implications for acts of writing. Although such a lot of work exists in the area, or may be precisely because of that, there is a further imperative to study the construction of space in the four novels of Rushdie mentioned earlier, and let me briefly discuss them one after the other to outline that scope.

Midnight's Children is set in the context of India being liberated from British colonialism and becoming an independent country. It allegorically deals with actual historical events before, and primarily after, the independence and partition of India. The story is narrated by its chief protagonist Saleem Sinai who was born precisely at midnight 15 August 1947, the exact moment when India achieved its independence, and was partitioned. Hence, a space-based analysis of this novel will have to be based on the setting of the story – India's transition from British colonialism to independence and the partition of British India into two different national territories. The analysis has to mainly focus on how the characters of the story struggle to live on under the new living spaces, to encounter issues of assimilation, alienation, loss, longing, and so forth. Moreover, a spatial study of this novel also has to present arguments on how, under such alternating historical situations and under the tension between combating forces, the fragmented subjects who lived through these different forms of realities and were divided between their spatial longing and the new cultural environments, carry out their engagements with the compelling new world and its spatial dynamics.

The Satanic Verses deals with the experience of the two protagonists named Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. The story begins with their being spatially trapped in a hijacked plane flying from India to Britain, which leads to their being dropped on to the

alien space of Britain itself, and facing problems that confront all migrants. The dilemma of mediating between the two cultures, the one they are from and the one they get involved in, and they being aware of the fact that they are unable to break with their own culture on one hand, and join the new one on the other, leads them to becoming disillusioned with both. In fact, this is the dilemma of the author himself, who struggles to acquire a sense of identity in an alienated environment. Controversies about this novel notwithstanding, Rushdie himself claimed that this story is about migration, metamorphosis, love, death, etc., rather than the depiction of Islam. The transformation undertaken by the two protagonists Gibreel and Saladin brings changes in their physical appearances in angelic and satanic forms respectively, which implicitly suggests that every person has both angelic and satanic potential and has to struggle forever in the liminal part between the two, but also suggests the liminality of the immigrant experience, as one crosses spaces. Besides, the outbreak of the protagonist's schizophrenia can be seen as the metaphorical representation of the divided selves that the characters confront when facing their alternate reality, partly due to the failure of multicultural integration and the frustrations of the migrant experience. Settings like the hijacked plane, the English Channel, the place that the two protagonists fall into after the explosion of the place, and England itself, are all spaces, and these become important elements for a discussion of this novel.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the protagonist Moraes, who is also called "Moor" throughout the story, is the narrator. It follows the trajectory of four generations of Moor's family which traces his family's beginning down through time to his whole lifetime, with a focus on those impacts that his family exerts upon him in the course of ups and downs of its history. Set in real places, specifically such Indian cities as Cochin and Bombay, the use of Rushdie's technique of magical realism renders it possible to construct impossible episodes, for example, the representation of Moor's exceptional body which appears to be aging more faster than that of a normal person, but the novel is irrevocably hinged to real time and spaces. The story is based on numerous real historical figures and events, encompassing the portrayal of specific details associated with the last king of Granada Boabdil and his famous surrendering known as Puerto del Suspiro del Moro (in English "Pass of the Moor's Sigh"), from which the title of the book is taken, a chain of events in the history of India like the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the 1993 Bombay bombings, the gangster Dawood Ibrahim, etc., making the novel one that has to undergo concrete spatial analyses.

The Enchantress of Florence is claimed to be the most researched book amongst his works by Rushdie himself. The book consists of a succession of interweaving stories given out by the relations of various narrators and set in a variety of places. The setting of the story spans across vast areas in different continents, moving from the Mughal India under the reign of Emperor Akbar the Great to the city of Florence in the Renaissance period of Italy, amongst which the city Fatehpur Sikri, which was built up under the command of the ruler Akbar and served as the capital city of Mughal Empire, plays a special significance. Particularly, the hybrid Mughal architecture in Fatehpur Sikri is represented in detail by Rushdie and the aesthetic values they exemplify have been focused on. The cultural hybridity, which lies at the heart of this novel, is brought out through the elements of Mughal architecture and Mughal aesthetics, in particular focus on the palace complex in Fatehpur Sikri which serves as one of the most important settings in the novel. Rushdie's representations of the Mughal emperor Akbar and the fictionalization of many historical places allows one to investigate into how these historical realities and spatial models

provide a means of exploring the hybridity of all forms of cultures. Although the story moves between continents, from the court of Akbar to Renaissance Florence interlacing history with fantasy and fable, a spatial study of the novel has to particularly contextualize Fatehpur Sikri, which holds, as Rushdie argues, a special significance, as it shows how spaces enable the encountering and confrontation of cultures and the mixing and intermingling of cultural traditions.

In the final analysis, one can argue how Rushdie represents a variety of spaces in his fiction, and in particular explores the interactions between the characters and the spaces within which they play out their lives, with a focus on the possible implications that those spaces exert on them. As is presented in the foregoing analysis, in his act of writing, Rushdie constructs a variety of concepts of spaces that are richly embedded with different layers of meanings, such as material space, abstract space, concrete space, contradictory space, cultural space, different space, dominant space, central space, living space, spiritual space, imagined space, political space, bodily space, social space, repressive space, ruling space, urban space, and many more, which are metaphorically depicted most often as othered space, marginalized space and socialized space in the light of the theoretical framework for such an analysis. This imperative for a theoretical reflection on space is undoubtedly of great importance and value in the context of a globalized world, within which space has undergone radical change and the reconstructing of the global space has become a prominent and inevitable tendency. Salman Rushdie's fiction implicitly reveals a series of intricate internal interlinks between literature and space, between the production of space and the production of social relations, political power, ideology and physical discipline. His writings demonstrate the struggles of individuals in a modern world which is contradictory, transient, occasional, changing and schismatic, and in which they become dislocated, rootless, alienated, estranged, but at the same time get opportunities to resist the repressive space, to change the hegemonic space, to seek the possibilities of creating a differential and enabling space, to turn space into scapes for their own use. Hence, what I call the 'spatial imperative', or the absolute need to read 'space' in Rushdie's novels.

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

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SYMPOSIUM ON AESTHETIC TASTE

Introduction

Imagine two people holding up a screen to anticipating homeowners, who long to see the recent renovation. Suddenly, they drop the screen to reveal the final product of weeks of renovation. The cameras pan over to reveal the new look. The area that would have been a yard full of grass and shrubbery was changed to a lime green-painted cement with about 50 pink flamingos. The house was painted in an iridescent pink. As a spectator of this television show, you watch as the proud renovators announce that this might be their best design to date.

This exaggerated anecdote illustrates two key ideas. First, there is a 'standard' of taste that we appeal to on a regular basis; if not, we would take these renovators seriously if they attempted to call this home beautiful. What is more, if you think this example doesn't sound so bad, there is probably some other combination of color and design that you would find disagreeable, regardless of how well it functioned. Second, the cultures in which we live help to shape our taste. We could imagine that a society existed where this color combination, perhaps, made sense. Given how much we deploy our individual and cultural tastes in our daily lives, it seems strange that theories of taste are largely absent from contemporary discussions of aesthetics.

Theories of aesthetic taste thrived in the eighteenth century, as George Dickie proclaimed with the title of his 1995 book *The Century of Taste*. Despite the pervasiveness of taste in popular culture, the concept has not thrived as much in recent academic discourse. Aesthetics has continued to be present, with traditional concepts like beauty and sublimity ebbing and flowing. But robust theories of taste have not maintained as much interest, not like the eighteenth century anyway. This symposium is a modest attempt to start bringing aesthetic taste back to the foreground of philosophical aesthetics.

The papers in this Symposium on Taste bring the conversations into the contemporary world. João Lemos notes in his paper, "A Taste of Moral Concerns: On the Applied Judgment of Taste," that the conversations surrounding Kant's notion of taste have emphasized the judgments of free beauty. Lemos, however, appeals to Kant's idea of an applied judgment of taste, which is a judgment of dependent (or adherent) beauty, in order to show that this kind of aesthetic judgment can connect to moral considerations. In other words, an applied judgment of beauty does not have to separate itself from the moral and political ideas within a work of art.

Also focusing on Kant, in "Kant's Feeling: Why a Judgment of Taste is *De Dicto* Necessary," José Fernández offers an important distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* by arguing that judgments of taste in Kant's theory are not statements about objective facts. In each of Kant's three *Critiques*, necessity is important for making a judgment. In a judgment of taste, the kind of necessity is viewed as exemplary. Fernández argues that the necessity at work here can apply only to the proposition (*de dicto*) and not to the object (*de re*).

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Bringing the discussion of taste into a, perhaps, surprising context, Carsten Friberg's "Taste and Surveillance Capitalism" asks why taste is not often included in discussions around contemporary culture, especially involving capitalism. As data collection has become increasingly prominent in our digital lifestyle, taste is needed as a necessary critique to this form of capitalism.

Finally, in "Aesthetic Taste Now: A Look Beyond Art and the History of Philosophy," I explore how theories of taste can be influential in areas beyond art, such as prisons, engineering, and business. While formal discussions of taste have waned from academic discourse since the eighteenth century, aesthetic taste, no less than beauty, sublime, and aesthetic experience, has continually played a role in addressing human needs. Rather than being passive about taste, I suggest reasons why individuals and communities both stand to benefit from actively understanding and developing this aesthetic concept.

We hope that this symposium helps to stimulate some new discussions on aesthetic taste, while maintaining the contributions of history.

Michael R. Spicher
Boston Architectural College & *Massachusetts College of Art and Design, USA*

A Taste of Moral Concerns: On the Applied Judgment of Taste

JOÃO LEMOS

Abstract

Kant's account of taste is often taken to imply that aesthetic appreciation and moral issues are incompatible – as if one could not consider purposes of a moral sort while passing a judgment of taste.

Taking into account how morally and politically engaged art has proven to be, it is easy to see why interest in Kant's account of taste has waned.

This cannot be the whole story, though. I claim that the applied judgment of taste can include the consideration of moral purposes while remaining an aesthetic judgment: I argue, first, that the beauty of buildings and the beauty of horses may include the consideration of concepts of a moral sort and that human beauty does necessarily include it; in the second part of my paper, I will give an account of why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

If my views are correct, the applied judgment of taste instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged art objects without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement. As such, Kant's notion of applied judgment of taste might enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself.

Keywords: Kant; taste; beauty; aesthetic appreciation; moral and political engagement.

It is hard to find a dictionary or encyclopedia of aesthetics that does not mention Kant's aesthetic theory or Kant's account of taste. And yet, the references made to his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* are usually focused only on the pure judgment of taste.

Focusing on this notion makes it easier to situate Kant's account both within his entire philosophical system and within the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline. What is more, such a focus has proven to be of much help when one intends to present Kant as a distinguished precursor of the art for art's sake movement, of aesthetic formalism, or even of the so-called theories of the aesthetic attitude.

As such, Kant has often been described as if his views on aesthetic appreciation had made it to be incompatible with the consideration of moral issues – as if one could not consider purposes of a moral sort while passing a judgment of taste. Now, taking into account how morally and politically engaged art has become since Kant and above all throughout the last century, it is easy to see why interest in Kant's account of taste has waned.

Such a picture of Kant and his aesthetic theory is not the most accurate, though. To be sure, there are two kinds of judgment of taste: the pure judgment of taste (the judgment

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of free beauty); and the applied judgment of taste (the judgment of adherent beauty). Descriptions of Kant's theory are usually concerned with the former. My paper will be rather focused on the latter.

I claim that the judgment of adherent beauty can include the consideration of moral purposes while still being an aesthetic judgment.

In the first part of my paper, I will argue that the beauty of buildings and the beauty of horses may include the consideration of concepts of a moral sort and that human beauty does necessarily include it; in the second part, I will give an account of why adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

If my hypotheses are correct, we have good reasons to believe that Kant's aesthetic theory, and particularly his notion of applied judgment of taste, might enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself. The judgment of adherent beauty instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged works of art without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement.

I

Kant introduces the notion of adherent beauty at the outset of §16 of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.[1] He describes it as a kind of beauty that presupposes a "concept of what the object ought to be" and "the perfection of the object in accordance with it."[2] Adherent beauties are thus "ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end."[3]

As we can see a couple of paragraphs later, that is the case of the beauty of buildings, horses, and human beings:

> the beauty of a human being (and in this species that of a man, a woman, or a child), the beauty of a horse, of a building (such as a church, a palace, an arsenal, or a garden-house) presuppose a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be, hence a concept of its perfection, and is thus merely adherent beauty.[4]

Nothing in this passage can make us sure of what kind of internal objective purposiveness is at work in adherent beauty. In the case of the beauty of a building, it is very likely that criteria of functionality play a role, for, as Kant states in §51, "the appropriateness of the product to a certain use is essential in a *work of architecture*;"[5] but it is not hard to think of architecture as raising moral issues as well. According to Geoffrey Scarre, for instance, when architects fail to see "that buildings should be fitted to human beings", and not the converse, "[i]n Kantian language" they fail "to treat people as the *ends* of their activity."[6] To be sure, this does not entail that every building has a moral end in its cause – as Paul Guyer maintains, at least some buildings "have practical but not moral purposes."[7] But one could hardly argue that purposes of a moral sort are never in the cause of a building or that such purposes are never to be taken into account in judging its beauty.

Something similar happens when one turns to the question of knowing what kind of concept the beauty of a horse adheres to. Nothing in §16, nor even in the entire third *Critique*, functions as evidence that such a concept is of such or such a sort. However, something promising if linked up with the assertion that the beauty of a horse is of an adherent kind can be found in the *Critique of Practical Reason*: Kant asserts that, if compared

with inclination, love or fear, admiration comes nearer to the feeling of respect but, unlike the latter, it "can be directed to things also," such as "the strength and swiftness of many animals."[8] While one cannot conclude from these words that the beauty of a horse is fixed by a concept of perfection of a moral sort, it is plausible to believe Kant's view to be that anything that precludes a horse from displaying its strength and swiftness would also preclude us from judging it beautiful. It is precisely to this excerpt of the second *Critique* that Scarre draws attention when he suggests that Kant's view might have been "that the limits of the legitimate decoration of horses are set by a quasi-ethical requirement of preserving their ability to display their strength and swiftness."[9]

In *The Metaphysics of Morals* there is something challenging as well: Kant says that once "violent and cruel treatment of animals (...) weakens and gradually uproots a natural predisposition that is very serviceable to morality in one's relations with other people," human beings have "a duty to refrain from this."[10] From this passage, too, it is plausible to believe Kant's view in third *Critique*'s §16 to be that anything that promotes, functions, or perhaps looks like a violent and cruel treatment of an animal would preclude us from judging it beautiful.

Here, as above, Guyer would claim that a horse "has no moral standing of its own" and, thus, that "any suggestion that it is only moral ends that restrict permissible forms in the case of adherent beauty is incorrect."[11] This does not entail that moral concepts are never to be considered within the judgment of adherent beauty, though; on the contrary, as Guyer himself does add, "an object's failure to satisfy either our moral expectations or some other practical but non-moral expectations will be sufficient to block any pleasure in its beauty."[12] All Guyer seems to hold, then, is that ends of a moral sort are neither always considered nor the only ones to be considered.

As for myself, I wonder what Kant would say about the nature of the ends that the beauty of a horse adheres to in a time when moral and political issues such as animal rights are seen by many as a major concern. Insofar as the right to housing is also often seen as a prior political and moral issue, the same applies to the concepts of what the object ought to be considered in the beauty of a building. Based on the excerpts I have quoted from the second *Critique* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*, I suggest that concepts of a moral sort could be among the ones to be considered: if anything in an object conflicts with duties we have to ourselves, then we cannot judge that object beautiful.

Let me now move to the beauty of a human being. Going back to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we will see that the concept of perfection that the beauty of human beings is fixed by is of a moral sort.

In §17, Kant says that an ideal signifies "the representation of an individual being as adequate to an idea."[13] As such, the ideal of the beautiful, the ideal of beauty, is the representation of an individual as being adequate to what Kant had just called "the archetype of taste."[14] Next, Kant asserts that "[o]nly that which has the end of its existence in itself, the *human being*, who determines his ends himself through reason (…) is capable of an ideal of *beauty*"[15]. Now, since the human being is a moral being, precisely insofar as (s)he determines her/his ends her/himself through reason, Kant can finally add that "in the *human figure* (…) the ideal consists in the expression of the *moral*,"[16] in other words, that the ideal of (human) beauty is "[t]he visible expression of moral ideas."[17]

That being said, considering that human beauty must be judged according to such an ideal – which, as an ideal, is judged in terms of its adequacy to a concept of reason and which, as the ideal of human beauty, is judged in terms of its adequacy to the archetype

of taste, which after all is a moral idea – we are entitled to conclude that the adherent beauty of a human being is conditioned by a concept of what a human being ought to be, which is an idea of a moral sort.[18]

Human beauty is not at odds with moral concerns, then. On the contrary, the judgment of the beauty of a human being is necessarily applied to the visible expression of the moral.

What is more, even before asserting that only the human being is capable of an ideal of beauty, Kant had said that the archetype of taste was "a mere idea, which everyone must produce in himself, and in accordance with which he must judge everything that is an object of taste."[19] Not only human beauty, then, but rather everything that is an object of taste[20] must be judged in accordance with the archetype of taste. Now, such an archetype can only be represented as an ideal of the beautiful, as we have seen, and the ideal of the beautiful, as the ideal of human beauty, is the expression of the moral. If things are so, then, it seems plausible to suggest Kant's view to be that everything that is an object of taste must be judged in terms of its adequacy to a moral idea.[21]

To sum up, even though we cannot be sure what kind of concepts about objects ought to play a role in the beauty of a building or of a horse, we have good reasons to believe moral concepts to be among them. In the specific case of human beauty, I have made it evident that the concept of an end that human beauties adhere to is of a moral sort. If it is so, I am entitled to claim that adherent beauty can include – and in some cases it necessarily includes – the consideration of moral concerns.

The question that now arises is whether adherent beauty is a kind of beauty. One must have in mind that

> the beauty for which an idea is to be sought must not be a *vague* beauty, but must be a beauty *fixed* by a concept of objective purposiveness, consequently it must not belong to the object of an entirely pure judgment of taste, but rather to one of a partly intellectualized judgment of taste[22].

In other words, I must answer the question of knowing whether a partly intellectualized judgment of taste, an applied judgment of taste,[23] is a genuine kind of judgment of taste. In the remainder of my paper I shall turn to that.

II

We have seen that, according to §16, the beauty of an adherent kind presupposes a "concept of what the object ought to be" and "the perfection of the object in accordance with it."[24] This is not an uncontroversial statement, for in the title of the third *Critique*'s previous section (§15) Kant had written that "[t]he judgment of taste is entirely independent from the concept of perfection."[25]

Fortunately, still in §16 we can find a decisive hint about why the applied judgment of taste is a judgment of taste, or, in other words, why adherent beauty is a kind of beauty. After having mentioned the beauty of a building, the beauty of a horse, and the beauty of a human being as adherent beauties, Kant writes:

> One would be able to add much to a building that would be pleasing in the intuition of it if only it were not supposed to be a church; a figure could be beautiful with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular lines, as the New Zealanders do with their tattooing, if only it were not a human being[26].

I take two suggestions from this assertion: that in order to assess the beauty of a church or the beauty of a human being concepts of what those objects ought to be must be considered; and yet, that the consideration of such concepts – in this case, respectively, church and human being – does not prevent the faculty of the imagination from playing freely and, therefore, that it does not preclude one from judging those objects beautiful.[27]

To be sure, the concepts of what the objects ought to be constrain, limit the freedom of the faculty of imagination. However, they do not undermine it. Considering the concept of an end that determines what a human being ought to be, therefore the concept of its perfection, one might claim, for instance, that its figure must not be tattooed with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular lines; considering the concept of an end that determines what a church ought to be, therefore the concept of its perfection, one might claim that its floor plan must be cruciform.[28] Although such concepts do constrain, limit, circumscribe, or even guide, the freedom of the faculty of imagination, it still imagines freely, in a free play with the understanding.[29]

Now, since, in the case of adherent beauty, despite the constraints imposed on the freedom of the faculty of imagination by the consideration of concepts, imagination does imagine in a free play with the understanding, then adherent beauty is de jure beautiful, the applied judgment of taste is de jure a judgment of taste.

To summarize, even though, in the case of adherent beauty, concepts of what the object ought to be must be considered, such concepts are not to function as the determining ground of the judgment. The determining ground of the judgment of adherent beauty is the pleasure taken in the free play of the imagination with the understanding. Adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

III

We have just seen why adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste. As long as imagination imagines freely, in a free play with the understanding, and as long as our pleasure is taken in such play, we can pass a (pure or applied) judgment of taste and judge the object (free or adherently) beautiful.

Previously, in the first part of this paper, we had seen that the applied judgment of taste, the judgment of adherent beauty, can include the consideration of moral concepts. In the case of the beauty of horses and the beauty of buildings we cannot be sure that it does, even though we have good reasons to believe so, namely if we appeal to some of Kant's works other than his third *Critique* or if we imbue Kant's aesthetic theory with current major moral and political issues, such as the right to housing or animal rights. In the case of human beauty, things look crystal-clear – within the framework of Kant's theory, the beauty of human beings must be accordant with the visible expression of the moral.

Now, if my views are correct, that means that the applied judgment of taste can take moral issues into account – as a matter of fact, in some cases it must include the consideration of concerns of a moral sort.

And yet, it does not become a cognitive judgment, for imagination keeps imagining freely, in a free play with the understanding – and it is in such play that we take the pleasure that works as the determining ground of the judgment.[30] The applied judgment

of taste is, in Kant's words, a partly intellectualized judgment of taste, a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment. It is a genuine kind of aesthetic judgment, a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

The fact that the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste is pertinent in many respects, namely within the history of aesthetics and Kant's own philosophical system[31]. For present purposes, this fact is of crucial importance because, as a judgment of taste, the judgment of adherent beauty instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged works of art without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement. As a judgment the determining ground of which is a pleasure taken in the free play of the imagination with the understanding, it has a disinterested nature. However, this does not mean it is of an uninterested sort, for it can include – and at least in some cases it must include – the consideration of moral and political concerns.

If things are so, I suggest that we should avoid taking it at face value that Kant advocates for an aesthetic purism or that he would prefer foliage for borders or on wallpapers to any masterpiece of figurative art or to a cutting-edge, twentieth or twenty-first century art object. To be sure, such a picture of Kant has been used not only to criticize him, but also as an anticipation of the theses grounding the art for art's sake movement in the early nineteenth century, of the ones supporting aesthetic formalism in the twentieth, or even of the statements of the so-called theories of the aesthetic attitude[32]. Unfortunately, a significant part of both criticism and support of Kant's aesthetic theory has stemmed from a misreading of it.

If we read Kant's aesthetic theory the way I propose, that is, as one that includes the consideration of concepts of a moral sort at the core of (adherent) beauty, at the heart of the (applied) judgment of taste, we will be able to enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself, with an account of aesthetic appreciation that, although admitting that such appreciation can include the consideration of the moral and political engagement of artistic objects, yet it does not make it anything but aesthetic.

Neither taste nor beauty is at odds with moral and political issues, then. Perhaps the current avoidance of both just reflects our fears about ourselves, as Kathleen Marie Higgins holds, "perhaps we doubt that we really do have enough of a heart to appreciate and transform at the same time. Obsessively aware of what is unbeautiful, we can only find beauty a threatening challenge."[33]

NOVA University of Lisbon, Portugal

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Notes

[1] English quotations of Kant's works are from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood.

[2] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 114.

[3] Ibid., 114.

[4] Ibid., 114.

[5] Ibid., 200.

[6] Geoffrey Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 21 (1981), 351-362, at 359.

[7] Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), 357-366, at 364.

[8] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 202.

[9] Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', 359.

[10] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 564.

[11] Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', 364. According to Guyer, such a suggestion has been made by Scarre. Indeed, Scarre holds that the concept of what the object ought to be involved in the judgment of adherent beauty "somehow places a restriction of a moral sort on the aesthetic judgement" (Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', 357) and that one of the necessary conditions of an object's being adherently beautiful is that "it does not offend against decorum (where it belongs to a kind of objects for which questions of decorum arise)" (ibid., 358).

[12] Ibid., 364. To some extent, he seems to agree with Henry E. Allison, according to whom "other considerations (…) may, but need not be, moral" (Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 140). Earlier, Martin Gammon had asserted it was "difficult to discern the moral "decorum" which stems from restricting the crenelations on "summer houses"" (Martin Gammon, '*Parerga* and *Pulchritudo adhaerens*: A Reading of the Third Moment of the "Analytic of the Beautiful"', *Kant-Studien* 90 (1999), 148-167, at 163).

[13] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 117.

[14] Ibid., 116. In other words, the ideal of beauty is the representation of the archetype of taste "in an individual presentation" (ibid., 117).

[15] Ibid., 117.

[16] Ibid., 120.

[17] Ibid., 120.

[18] Addressing some consequences of the introduction of the notion of an ideal of beauty to Kant's entire philosophical system, Allison suggests that "Kant's discussion of this unique ideal points ahead to the connection of taste and the experience of beauty with morality" (Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 143). Here as elsewhere, Allison follows the view of Gammon, according to whom "[t]he crux of the "ideal of beauty" in Kant's account (…) rests on the possibility of accommodating a sensuous estimate to the estimate of moral perfection, which necessarily exceed the bounds of sense" (Gammon, '*Parerga* and *Pulchritudo adhaerens*', 165). However valuable these hypotheses may be, elaborating on them would exceed the purposes of my paper.

[19] Ibid., 116-117.

[20] Let alone "that [which] is an example of judging through taste, even the taste of everyone" (ibid., 116-117).

[21] This would be a stronger claim than the one I have sustained in this paper. As such, it would require a more extended argument. For present purposes, namely to argue that, within Kant's

aesthetic theory, moral concepts can play a role in judgments of taste, all one needs is to show that in judgments of human beauty they necessarily do so. This is what I have shown.

[22] Ibid., 117.

[23] Or, in §48's words, "a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment" (ibid., 190).

[24] Ibid., 114.

[25] Ibid., 111. While some authors see just a puzzle here (see: Eva Schaper, 'Free and Dependent Beauty', in Paul Guyer *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment – Critical Essays* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 101-119; Robert Stecker, 'Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 21 (1987), 89-99; Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Philip Mallaband, 'Understanding Kant's Distinction between Free and Dependent Beauty', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 52 (2002), 66-81; Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), 357-366; or Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the* Critique of Judgment (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)), some others cannot help noticing a contradiction (see: Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974); Ruth Lorand, 'Free and Dependent Beauty: A Puzzling Issue', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 29 (1989), 32-40; or Denis Dutton, 'Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994), 226-241). In any case, the worries raised by the abovementioned assertions (the judgment of taste is entirely independent from the concept of perfection; and adherent beauty presupposes the perfection of the object in accordance with a concept of what such object ought to be) cannot be allayed just by appealing to the difference between pure and impure judgment of taste. As Schaper does warn, calling the applied judgment of taste impure "makes no difference in this respect as it still is to count as a judgment of taste, an aesthetic appraisal. Any dilution of such a notion by admitting conceptual ties at all is a move away from the necessary conditions of aesthetic appraisals as outlined so far in the first three Moments" (Schaper, 'Free and Dependent Beauty', 104).

[26] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 115.

[27] Here it must be reminded that the determining ground of the judgment of beauty is a pleasure in the free play of the imagination with the understanding.

[28] I have taken the former example from *Critique of the Power of Judgment*'s §16 itself; the latter, from Guyer: "while the general purpose of worship and such more specific requirements as that of a cruciform floor plan may place limits on what can please us in a church, these hardly provide rules which are sufficient for producing a beautiful church or judging one. The concept of its purpose leaves room for a genuine aesthetic response to the beauty of a church, although it places some limits on the forms which might constitute that beauty" (Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 219). Hans-Georg Gadamer had already sketched a similar explanation out by associating adherent beauty with those cases "where "looking to a concept" does not abrogate the freedom of the imagination" (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd, revised edn (New York, Continuum: 2006), 41). More recently, Brent Kalar has spoken of the freedom of the imagination as being "somehow *circumscribed*" (Brent Kalar, *The Demands of Taste in Kant's Aesthetics* (New York, Continuum: 2006), 85) while Robert Stecker placed emphasis on the suggestion that "[t]he imagination is guided by a concept but not determined by it" (Stecker, 'Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art', 92).

[29] Denis Dutton goes further and stresses it is only by means of rules that such a play is possible. According to Dutton, "complete, structureless freedom would make play impossible; there can be no play without rules" (Dutton, 'Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty', 237). It is precisely because of this necessary link between play and rules that he has rather spoken of the latter as the "enabling conditions" of beauty (ibid., 233) and asserted that Kant "recognized the ability of rules not just to limit, but to incite the free imagination and provide it with material" (ibid., 234). Once again, Gadamer had already advanced something similar when he stated that "this

imaginative productivity is not the richest where it is merely free (…) but rather in a field of play where the understanding's desire for unity does not so much confine it as suggests incitements to play" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 41). One of the main reasons why there is no unanimity among scholars may be the fact that Kant has never established the conditions of the freedom of the faculty of imagination. Guyer, for instance, admits as "a fundamental problem about Kant's explanation of aesthetic response (…) the question of the real conditions of the freedom of the imagination" (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 219), that is, "the indeterminacy of his conception of the freedom of the imagination, linked to his uncertainty about the scope of the power of abstraction" (ibid., 222). Nevertheless, as Guyer himself does add, "anything less than a very broad power of abstraction will make aesthetic response a rare occurrence. (…) The nature of sensation and empirical knowledge, were the imagination constrained by everything these present, would preclude our finding many objects beautiful. Clearly, Kant did not mean to imply such a conclusion" (ibid., 224).

[30] With regards to the specific case of human beauty, I therefore agree with Stecker, according to whom "Kant's point (…) is that the perception of the expression of moral character is *not* an instance of subsuming an object under a concept according to a rule. It is not a judgement *determined* by a concept. There is no rule for seeing moral character; rather it requires the play of the imagination as it scans face and figure. However, unless concepts (moral ideas) are being used in some sense, there would be no basis for seeing face and figure *as* having any character at all" (Robert Stecker, 'Lorand and Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 30 (1990), 71-74, at 72).

[31] Kant's judgment of taste plays a crucial role in the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline, in the eighteenth-century – contra Burke and the empiricists, Kant argues that it is a universally valid judgment; contra Baumgarten and the rationalists, he maintains it is an aesthetic one. Such a judgment is also of great relevance within the framework of Kant's philosophical system: in short, it represents the possibility of throwing a bridge from the domain of the concepts of nature to the domain of the concept of freedom. In both contexts, that is, in the ambit of the history of aesthetics and in the ambit of Kant's philosophical system – the applied judgment of taste has the merit of including within the scope of aesthetics anything the aesthetic value of which presupposes concepts (concepts of what the objects ought to be, as well as the perfection of the latter in accordance with the former), such as artistic beauty, the so-called fine arts, or, more generally, the arts.

[32] Understanding Kant as a precursor of the theories of the aesthetic attitude can be itself controversial enough. As Nick Zangwill remarks, "[t]he notions of an interested attitude or of interested contemplation (…) are all quite different senses of 'interest' from the one that Kant has in mind" (Nick Zangwill, 'UnKantian Notions of Disinterest', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (1992), 149-152, at 151). In any case, I guess that not even such theories have been accurately described by their critics – with George Dickie at head. To be sure, as Jerome Stolnitz asserts: "aesthetic perception is frequently thought to be a "blank, cow-like stare." It is easy to fall into this mistake when we find aesthetic perception described as "just looking," without any activity or practical interest. (…) But this is surely a distortion of the facts of experience" (Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1960), 37). For some insightful accounts of the aesthetic attitude, see: Sushil Kumar Saxena, 'The Aesthetic Attitude', *Philosophy East and West* 8 (1978), 81-90; David E. W. Fenner, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996); and Gary Kemp, 'The Aesthetic Attitude', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39 (1999), 392-399).

[33] Kathleen Marie Higgins, 'Whatever Happened to Beauty? A Response to Danto', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996), 281-284, at 283.

Kant's Feeling: Why a Judgment of Taste is *De Dicto* Necessary

JOSÉ L. FERNÁNDEZ

Necessity can be ascribed not only to propositions, but also to feelings.[1] In the *Critique of Judgment* (KdU), Immanuel Kant argues that a feeling of beauty is the necessary satisfaction instantiated by the 'free play' of the cognitive faculties, which provides the grounds for a judgment of taste (KdU 5:196, 217-19). In contradistinction to the theoretical necessity of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the moral necessity of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the necessity assigned to a judgment of taste is *exemplary necessity* (KdU 5:237).

Necessity can also be assigned by employing the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction, namely, by ascribing entailments of what must necessarily hold to either a thing (*de re*) or to a proposition (*de dicto*). Although Kant does not use the distinction in any of the three *Critiques*, this omission has not prevented Kant scholars from applying the distinction in their analyses of the first two *Critiques*.[2] In this paper, I examine the role that modality plays in Kant's third *Critique* and I attempt to bring the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction to bear on Kant's famous aesthetic theory. Ultimately, I perform a retrospective classification of the modality of taste by arguing that because a judgment of taste is not a statement about an objective fact, a judgment of '*x* is beautiful' can only be read as *de dicto necessary*.

I

Imagine two people, Mme. Bongoût and Hr. Alltäglich, at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art looking at Johannes Vermeer's *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher* (1662). Each one feels that the painting is beautiful, and, having read Kant's third *Critique* in their university years, both hold their judgments to be necessary. However, if we had access to their subjective feelings, we would find an important difference between the *kind* of necessity ascribed to their judgments. Herr Alltäglich states that 'Vermeer's painting is *necessarily* beautiful'; Madam Bongoût states that '*Necessarily*, Vermeer's painting is beautiful'. The difference between the two judgments is that in Hr. Alltäglich's case, the necessity is *de re* (said of the thing); in Mme. Bongoût's case, the necessity is *de dicto*, (said of the dictum). Only one of these necessary judgments is appropriate to the peculiar *subjective standpoint* and *feeling-exercising* language of Kant's aesthetic theory, and in the sections that follow, we shall endeavor to reveal why only one of these two judgments is faithful to Kant's theory.

II

Kant distinguishes his theory of taste from his theories of knowledge and morality by writing: "[A] judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment…but an aesthetic one" (KdU 5:203). Cognitive judgments draw upon determinate concepts, which pertain to objects

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in the domains of nature and freedom. Both of these domains are constituted by certain laws: "Legislation through concepts of nature takes place through the understanding, and is theoretical. Legislation through the concept of freedom takes place through reason, and is merely practical" (KdU 5:174).

However, in the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, which provides a checklist of conditions that must be satisfied to formulate a judgment of taste, Kant carefully distinguishes the necessity of this judgment from the necessity in theoretical and practical *cognitive* judgments. In contradistinction to cognitive judgments, which are based on determinate or fixed concepts, a judgment of taste does not draw from determinate concepts because it pertains to the subject's "feeling of pleasure" (KdU 5:204), and is thus a reflective judgment.[3] As presented below, the distinction between cognitive and reflective judgments tracks the difference between determinate concepts, which attempt to subsume objects under the categories of the understanding, and indeterminate concepts, which, if they attempted to do the same, would find it a fruitless endeavor (*eine fruchtlose Bemühung*) (KdU 5:231).

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously stated: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without content are blind …. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only from their unification can cognition arise" (KrV A51-B76). Here, 'content' (*Inhalt*) is representational content, i.e., the objects represented by our rule-bearing concepts (thoughts) and through the senses (intuitions). Kant argues that our knowledge of objects always takes the form of a judgment; however, before a judgment is made, it must be formally cast. For example, the judgments 'The rose is red' (KrV B70) and 'The rose is fragrant' (KdU 5:215) share a formal structure, they are both cast in the subject-predicate form 'The *a* is *F*'.

For Kant, however, beauty is not a property of objects and cannot be cast in a subject-predicate form in which *a* exemplifies *F-ness*. In order for a judgment to be grounded by a concept, it must correspond to an object with *determinate* properties. Objects comprise the *content* of concepts, and the correspondence between a concept and an object is verified by its relation to the actual facts. The empirical necessity that Kant explicates between concepts and objects in the First *Critique* is rearticulated in the Third *Critique*: "Objects of concepts whose objective reality can be proved are matters of fact (*res facti*)" (KdU 5:468). What, however, can count as the evidentiary criteria for an aesthetic judgment? Nothing, for Kant argues, "A judgment of taste…cannot be determined by bases of proof" (KdU 5:284).

This lack of empirical evidence is crucial for our understanding of the difference between determinate and indeterminate concepts because in a judgment of taste there is no strict correspondence between the judgment and a determinate concept. Yet, although judgments of taste are not formed from determinate concepts, and are indeed short of providing *res facti*, such judgments nevertheless possess a standard for universally valid aesthetic feeling, communicability, and agreement. But what is this necessary standard, and whence does feeling arise?

III

When Kant uses the term 'feeling,' he is not referring to any of the body's five sensory modalities: "If a determination of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is called sensation, then this expression means something entirely different" (KdU 5:206). According to Kant's aesthetic nomenclature, 'feeling' is a technical word with a connotation very different than "an objective representation of the senses" (KdU 5:206). Instead, 'feeling'

is the reflective satisfaction that grounds a judgment of taste (KdU 5:209). Kant argues that such judgments are facilitated (*erleichterten*) by the *a priori* constituents of "*imagination* to combine the manifold of intuition, and *understanding* to provide the unity of the concept uniting the [component] presentations" (KdU 5:217).

Kant calls this contemplative "mental state" the "free play of the faculties of cognition" (KdU 5:218) that takes place within a judging subject and provides the grounds for a feeling of beauty. Consequently, the free-play takes place from a unique *subjective standpoint* that does not aim to subsume objects under determinate concepts (KdU 5:217), and its upshot aesthetic feeling is perceived with disinterest and without the presentation of an end (*Zweck*), what Kant famously calls *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck* or "purposiveness without a purpose" (KdU 5:220). Indeed, as Béatrice Longuenesse has put it, "aesthetic judgment *starts* where the search for [determinate] concepts *collapses*."[4] However, although there is no single determinate concept underlying a judgment of taste, our experience still requires that an object appear *as if* it had an end designed for our awareness. These subjectively purposive feelings and harmonious interactions of the free-play provide the *necessary* grounds (KdU 5:237) that will be "valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable" (KdU 5:218). But it is precisely here that we must inquire as to the nature of this necessity, and how it is underwritten.

IV

Kant considers the modality of taste in the Fourth Moment of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*. He writes that, "This necessity is of a special kind" (KdU 5:237), and perhaps it will be helpful to consider briefly what I call, respectively, *the necessity of moments* and *the necessity of feeling*. Kant's *feeling* of beauty is, in a sense, both one and many. It is one by virtue of its unity and universality; it is many by virtue of the four conditions that *must be* satisfied for the possibility of arriving at a judgment of taste. These conditions are what might be called the *necessity of moments*: in *Quality*, it is necessary that feelings of the beautiful be disinterested (KdU 5:211); in *Quantity*, it is necessary that feelings of the beautiful be without a determinate concept and liked universally (KdU 5:219); in *Relation*, it is necessary that feelings of the beautiful be perceived as subjectively purposive (KdU 5:236); and in *Modality*, it is necessary that feelings of the beautiful be capable of necessary satisfaction (KdU 5:240). All of these conditions are *necessary* insofar as the failure to obtain any one moment renders a judgment of taste *impossible*.

The *necessity of moments* is a crucial, *sine qua non* feature of Kant's aesthetic architectonic, but it is not the only kind of necessary relations that make up a judgment of taste. There is also what might be called the *necessity of feeling*, or a *de rigueur* procedure in the constitution of a judgment of taste, which exhibits its own kind of necessary connections. Recall the peculiar subjective standpoint of the free play, i.e., that the free play of the cognitive faculties takes place within the judging subject, harmoniously quickens into a feeling of pleasure, and provides the grounds for a judgment of taste, which will be valid for everyone and universally communicable (KdU 5:221). Thus we have what appears to be a threefold schema of necessary entailments: (á) there is a necessary relationship between the free-play of the cognitive faculties themselves (i.e., imagination and understanding); ($\hat{a}$) there is a necessary connection between the harmonious free-play and the concomitant feeling of disinterested pleasure; and ($\tilde{a}$), there is a necessary tie between the feeling of disinterested pleasure and its expression as a judgment of taste. Moreover, the transitive move from (á) to ($\tilde{a}$) is necessary insofar as ($\tilde{a}$) would be impossible to obtain if not for the antecedent

moves in the series. In the following section, I should like to focus on how ($\tilde{a}$) ties in with yet another form of necessity, namely, the modality of taste.

V

The modality of taste is what Kant calls *exemplary necessity*, i.e., "a necessity of the assent of *everyone* to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that we are unable to state" (KdU 5:237). Kant's point about the modality of taste being "an example of a universal rule" cannot be overstated. Kant considers that because exemplary necessity obtains the assent of everyone to a judgment of taste,

> [everyone] must have a subjective principle, which determines only by feeling rather than concepts, though nonetheless with universal validity, what is liked or disliked. Such a principle, however, could only be regarded as a *common sense* (KdU 5:238).

In other words, the feeling '*It is necessary that* Vermeer's *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher* is beautiful' makes a claim to universality by asserting that other subjects should find this composition beautiful (KdU 5:237), which itself presupposes a principle through which the subject possesses a sense for what we might call a feeling of inter-subjective "pleasurability" or what *ought* to be pleasurable for other subjects with similar attunements of the cognitive powers (KdU 5:238). Subsequently, this "ought" is always "uttered conditionally" (KdU 5:237), that is, on condition that we *share in common* the cognitive faculties: "Only under the presupposition…that there is a common sense…the effect arising from the free play of our cognitive powers…can a judgment of taste be made" (KdU 5:238).

Thus a principle of common sense is constitutionally required for a judgment of taste to be any kind of statement that is grounded by aesthetic feeling *and* be universally communicable. Consequently, a judgment of taste *necessarily* presupposes common sense as the subjective principle of the free-play, which is itself a necessary ground for an aesthetic judgment. On the basis of what has been said so far, it seems that common sense provides the subject with a certain feeling that implies the possibility for others to respond to a given representation as it does.

The inter-subjective moment of an aesthetic judgment is affirmed according to this preliminary conception of common sense in which the subject puts others in its place. However, this *sense* of common sense seems dangerously solipsistic because its conclusion can portray the subject as an aesthetic narcissist that fails to consider the aesthetic feeling of others in its judgment: "For although the principle [of common sense] is only subjective. It would still be assumed as subjectively universal (an idea necessary for everyone)" (KdU 5:239).

Fortunately, common sense receives further elaboration by Kant in his formulation of the *sensus communis*:

> we must take *sensus communis* to mean the idea of a sense shared [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else's way of presenting [something], in order as it were to compare our own judgment with human reason in general and thus escape the illusion that arises from the ease of mistaking subjective and private conditions for objective ones (KdU 5:293).

Here Kant adds another component to common sense, namely, that by forming a judgment of taste, we not only presuppose the assent of everyone else, but we also presuppose a culture wherein we compare our own aesthetic judgments with the possible aesthetic

judgments of others and thus "put ourselves in the position of everyone else" (KdU 5:294). This sense of *sensus communis* compliments exemplary necessity by completing the circle, as it were. In the first account of common sense, we imagine others in our place; in *sensus communis*, we put ourselves in the place of others. This aesthetic enclosure of judgment provides coherence by preventing exemplarity from dangling its feet off the edge of a relativist *de gustibus non est disputadum* cliff; namely, by making intelligible the *possibility* that others share aesthetic *feeling* just as we do by possessing the same power of reflective judgment (KdU 5:341).

By tying exemplary necessity to the two senses of common sense, Kant attempts to bring together the subjectively private and objectively public. Thus there is a syncretism between the common sense and the *sensus communis* that secures the *reflective* grounds which can underwrite exemplarity's *inter-subjective* necessity.

VI

After establishing the modality of taste, Kant proceeds to define beauty as that "which is cognized without a concept as the object of necessary satisfaction" (KdU 5:240). Therefore, since (i) what "is cognized without a [determinate] concept" can only be the harmonious relational activity of the free-play, and since (ii) the free-play is the ground for judgments of taste that are exemplarily necessary, then (iii) beauty *is* the necessary satisfaction one *feels* in forming a judgment of taste. Although a judgment of taste is grounded in feeling, it is not a free-floating pronouncement without consideration of some object; however, with regard to whether objects actually possess beauty, Kant argues that a judgment of taste functions in an *analogical* sense, that is, *as if* the quality of beauty were a real, objective property of the object being judged (KdU 5:212). No determinate object is beautiful in itself because beauty is not a property of objects; rather, if beauty is to be "found" anywhere, it will be within the subject, namely, in the feeling of pleasure.

A judgment of taste does not pertain to determinate concepts that have objects as their content because beauty is not a predicate of objects. The statements 'This rose is red' and 'This rose is beautiful' are different judgments: the former draws from determinate concepts; the latter from the free-play. Also, because the necessity in a judgment of taste is exemplary, it should be the case that if a judgment of beauty is affirmed by someone having formed a feeling of pleasure, then that feeling stands as *an example* which the subject demands others with similar reflective capacities to share in agreement.

Taste, then, pertains to this peculiar feeling, and not to pronouncements about a representational object. My argument here can be further elucidated by noting how different ascriptions of necessity come to bear on Kant's theory of taste. In the following section, we will see how the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction can be applied in Kant's aesthetic theory of judgment, and I will argue that for a judgment of taste to be coherently understood, it must be read only as *de dicto* necessary.

VII

Recall our imagined visitors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Both find Vermeer's painting necessarily beautiful. For Hr. Alltäglich, the necessity is *de re*; for Mme. Bongoût, it is *de dicto*. In order to apply the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction to our study of Kant's theory of taste, we first have to establish that taste is expressed in language. Fortunately, Kant meets this criterion by stating that by forming a judgment of taste:

> one ascribes the satisfaction in an object to everyone, yet without grounding it in on a concept…and that this claim to universal validity belongs so essentially to a judgment by which *we declare something to be beautiful* that without thinking this it would never occur to anyone to use the expression (KdU 5:214, my italics).

Hence a judgment of taste is expressed in a *feeling-exercising* language that, being reflective and not cognitive, conveys to others the satisfaction one experiences before an object. But here we can also ask: what kinds of statements are these "which we declare"?

When we express a judgment of taste, the representation goes together with a *feeling* that we require others to share. However, we should not interpret this expression in the same way we would the expression 'This rose is red' because, as we have seen, a judgment of taste, i.e., the expression 'This rose is beautiful," is not asserting something objectively determinate about the rose:

> The judgment of taste determines its object with regard to satisfaction (as beauty) with a claim to the assent of everyone, *as if* it were objective. To say "This flower is beautiful" is the same as merely to repeat its own claim to everyone's satisfaction…. Now what should one infer from this except that beauty must be held to be a property of the flower itself… *And yet this is not how it is* (KdU 5:282, my italics).

To say '*x* is beautiful' is coterminous with the claim 'I have a *feeling* of satisfaction related to *x* that I require others to share, *ceteris paribus*, in relation to *x* as an example of a universal rule which I cannot quite state.' Importantly, Kant writes: "For we can generally say, whether it is the beauty of nature or of art that is at issue: that is beautiful which pleases in the mere judging (neither in sensation nor through a concept)" (KdU 5:306). By "we can generally say," Kant is alluding to universal statements or, more precisely, the *universality* that is expressed in judgments of taste. Thus what Kant means by "we can generally say...that is beautiful" is precisely the formulation I presented above with an emphasis on universality, e.g., 'I have a feeling of satisfaction related to *x* that I require others to share, *ceteris paribus*, in relation to *x* as an ***example of a universal rule*** which I cannot quite state.''

Consequently, a judgment of taste can be understood as the expression of aesthetic feeling and its concomitant universal demand. Necessity is ascribed to this expression as follows: '*It is necessary that* I have a feeling of satisfaction related to *x* that I require others to share, *ceteris paribus*, in relation to *x* as an example of a universal rule which I cannot quite state.' Or to contract the expression succinctly, '*It is necessary that x* is beautiful.' These statements do not have determinate objects and *res facti* as their truth-bearers; instead, a judgment of taste expresses the feeling that arises from the free-play, and finds its necessary entailments in the disinterested pleasure that others are required to share. Having elucidated the universal statements exemplified by judgments of taste, let us see how we can apply the *de re/de dicto* distinction to these statements in Kant's aesthetic theory.

VIII

The *de re/de dicto* distinction can be classified as follows. With regard to ascribing necessity, *de re* necessity applies to the thing; *de dicto* necessity is assigned to the whole statement.[5] Thus consider two competing judgments about Vermeer's *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher* (henceforth, YWWP):

1. *It is necessary that* YWWP is beautiful.
2. YWWP is *necessarily* beautiful.

In sentence 1, the scope of the necessity is *de dicto*; in sentence 2, the scope is *de re*. In other words, in sentence 1 the necessity ranges over the proposition as a whole, and not to the object YWWP, which, as we have seen, cannot, in Kant aesthetic theory, have the property of beauty; in sentence 2, however, the necessity falls on the subject of the proposition, namely, YWWP. Sentence 2 claims that it is Vermeer's painting, the thing, the *res*, which has the necessary entailment of beauty. However, sentence 2 cannot be the case because beauty does not belong to a determinate object, and YWWP is such a thing.

What makes YWWP a thing is, *inter alia*, its shape, color, texture, content, etc. By making the claim that 'YWWP is *necessarily* beautiful,' the compositional features of the painting form a set of attributes that YWWP must have in order to satisfy this *de re* claim of beauty.[6] However, all of these compositional features can be subsumed under determinate concepts, and thus are anathema to a Kantian judgment of taste. If a judgment of taste does draw from concepts, they have to be indeterminate by virtue of being subjectively purposive in reflection.

What is more, the *de re necessary* ascription of 'beautiful' in sentence 2 implies that beauty is a trait of YWWP, something that contributes to YWWP being what it is. This ascription also has its problems. Unlike YWWP's other compositional features, all of which are essential for YWWP to continue being YWWP, a pronouncement of, say, 'ugly' would do no harm to the *res* of YWWP. Thus, the *de re* necessary ascription of beauty is false, for the feeling of beauty (pleasure) or ugliness (aversion) is not an essential trait of Vermeer's painting.

However, the ascription of necessity in sentence 1, '*It is necessary that* YWWP is beautiful,' which is a contraction for the expression, '*It is necessary that* I have a *feeling* of satisfaction related to YWWP that I require others to share, *ceteris paribus*, in relation to YWWP as an example of a universal rule which I cannot quite state,' does not refer to YWWP directly, nor to any of its compositional properties. Instead, what sentence 1 expresses is a reflective judgment that takes place within the judging subject, which in turn provides the exemplary grounds for an aesthetic feeling that demands universal assent. Necessity, then, is ascribed to the *feeling* 'YWWP is beautiful', and not to the object YWWP.

Therefore, a Kantian expression of beauty can only be read as *de dicto* necessary. To make a *de re* necessary ascription of beauty would be to assign beauty as a property of a determinate object, but because a judgment of taste does not draw from determinate, cognitive concepts that have objects as their content, a *de re* necessary ascription of beauty would violate Kant's theory. So who is more faithful to Kant's aesthetic theory, Mme. Bongoût or Hr. Alltäglich? Mme. Bongoût, *naturellement*.

Fairfield University, USA

Notes

[1] Ascriptions of necessity apply not only to propositional contents but also to *unpropositional* contents. Feelings, imagination, memory, emotions, *etc*., are examples of unpropositional contents. See Pinto (2001: 17).

[2] E.g., *inter alios*, Guyer (1987: esp. 140); Howell (1992: esp. 180-81); and Keller (1998: esp. 162).

[3] A reflective judgment seeks to find a universal for a particular, and stands in contrast to a determinate judgment, which works the other way around (KdU 5:179-80).

[4] Longuenesse (2003: 146).

[5] The use of this distinction has a long history going back at least to medieval philosophy: "The first full use of the terms *de re* and *de dicto* is due to Thomas Aquinas, who was also the first to define the terms syntactically …. Aquinas divides [a] sentence syntactically into the subject and the predicate. The subject may be a full clause (in the *de dicto* case) or a thing (in the *de re* case)." See Ezra Keshet and Florian Schwartz, "*De Re/De Dicto*" in *The Oxford Handbook of Reference*, ed. Jeanette Gundel and Barbara Abbott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 169-70.

[6] Cf. Eddy M. Zemach's (1997) discussion of an artwork's "good-making features" in relation to its ontology; esp.,116-21.

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Taste and Surveillance Capitalism

CARSTEN FRIBERG

1. Introduction

The title might immediately raise the question why bring taste and surveillance capitalism together? The following is an attempt to reverse this question and ask in return: How is it possible not to include taste into discussing contemporary forms of culture which also means capitalism?

I will suggest taste as a critical approach to surveillance capitalism. Approaching from philosophy I am concerned with what kind of discussions on taste and aesthetics we should take into consideration as not every discourse on taste may prove to be of interest. However, I do suggest any discourse on taste addresses questions of cultural forms because taste is a social matter. We cannot discuss taste without also touching upon social and cultural questions.

Four steps are made. The first is to set the stage for the following, i.e. what the problem is and what surveillance capitalism is. Secondly follows comments on taste as an essentially social act which leads to discussing either the interpretation of what is judged to be of good or bad taste, or the sensorial component in it. The latter is my focus. Essential in this relation is education and thirdly the question is where the sensorial education of contemporary individuals takes place, which brings us to the presence of modern consumer-world and its recent form as surveillance capitalism. Fourthly the elements of senses and education ask us to focus on the sensorial formation we are subject to. It is suggested that taste matters today because it is as a possible – one could also argue necessary – critique of the cultural condition surveillance capitalism creates.

2. Surveillance Capitalism: A Challenge and a Problem

Before addressing the question of why taste in relation to the form of contemporary capitalism called surveillance capitalism, a first step is to establish what is the problematic about surveillance capitalism.

Surveillance capitalism is how Shoshana Zuboff names the form of capitalism that emerges from the machine computing of data collected from users (Zuboff 2019). She presents this as a third stage in capitalism, the first being the introduction of mass-production in early 20th century with Ford cars as the well-known example; the second the possibility of addressing consumers' desires directly, with Apple's iPod as the innovator. The iPod enables consumers to buy exactly the music they want instead of a product like LPs and CDs with a collection of music including also things the consumer has little or no interest in (Zuboff 2019, 27 ff.). This is an important step towards the third stage which she defines in eight points. I pick up the first: "A new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices, prediction, and sales"; the sixth: "The origin of a new instrumentarian power that asserts dominance

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over society"; and the seventh: "A movement that aims to impose a new collective order based on total certainty" (Zuboff 2019, v). The challenge, and problem, is how this form of economic order lays hands on our experiences to form them and to feed us with specific experiences that take dominance over our relation to our environment.

The intention here is only to give an idea of surveillance capitalism enough for pointing out the importance of taste. Obviously, this characteristic can cause debate when we go into details, perhaps questioned, but assuming there is a point we can proceed from it when made. Two aspects should briefly be emphasized. The first concerns what it is that is under surveillance; the second involves the extent of surveillance.

The question of what is under surveillance is a more technical aspect and one I will not discuss in depth. We speak here of surveillance of the data that is left behind from any online activity – whether being online is an active choice or not as some products will transmit data even if we believe we have turned off any such transmission as one example shows: "since early 2017, Android phones had been collecting location information by triangulating nearest cell towers, even when location services were disabled, no apps were running, and no carrier SIM card was installed in the phone" (Zuboff 2019, 243). Taking out a battery may prove to be the last option for being shot off from data transmissions which also implies terminating the use of the product.

Before getting paranoid – which may perhaps not be a false approach to it – it should be added that the surveillance is of data rather than content. It is, for example, the 'likes' we give to texts, pictures, films and other activities of other users, but not necessarily what it is we 'like'. The point is that we 'like', and 'likes' can be measured to influence users' attitudes, interests and approaches to something as demonstrated through experiments made with the emotional content in Facebook users' News Feed (Kramer, Guillory, Hancock 2014). The fact that someone is willing to share data proves to be more interesting than what is in fact shared, and instead of analysing content of data the interest is in the amount of data shared that enables predictions of users (Zuboff 2019, 271 f.). In 2018, a small consultancy, Cambridge Analytica, drew headlines with such work.

The other aspect concerns the extent of surveillance, a point I will offer a little more attention.

The motive for surveillance is to enable the prediction of individuals' preferences and behaviour. This is something applicable to any cultural form and the conclusion I aim at is not one of a revolutionary different view on culture and taste but a rather trivial one: people learn from experiences how to navigate among other people, and similarly we learn to predict their navigation. In classical philosophy we find this expressed by Hume in what he sees as the foundation for any moral relation to people: we expect them to act with consistency "otherwise our acquaintance with the persons and our observation of their conduct could never teach us their dispositions, or serve to direct our behaviour with regard to them" (Hume 1975, 86). In short: "Where would be the foundation of *morals*, if particular characters had no certain or determinate power to produce particular sentiments, and if these sentiments had no constant operation on actions?" (Hume 1975, 90, emphasis in original). What I address is hence a characterisation well established in Western philosophy and culture. I turn to aesthetics and taste to do what we have always done namely to rely on how such common and consistent patterns of behaviour appear in social matters.

Assuming we navigate among people by predicting their movements one significant difference between the age of Hume and the age of Zuboff is the extent to which

information is available about people and the means to influence them. The amount of information one person can handle is little in comparison with what machine learning can cope with – which, an important insertion, does not mean machines *learn* more or better than humans. The use of the notion *learning* may here be misleading.

The amount of information matters for what it is an individual is subject to. An effect of the stream of information given to a user of internet-based technologies is the massive one-sidedness of them. Despite an increase in what appears to be information about the world, including the world far from the user's own, it may be comparable to the world of a peasant in previous ages: one living in a world limited to the farm and village depending on neighbours' and old peoples' stories and occasionally getting news from the outside world. Someone living in a world of little relation, if any, to the world of the merchants in the city or the noble people. What the internet-based technology offers is a massive stream of information which is also efficiently shielding us off from information considered to be irrelevant to the user. They are irrelevant like the nobleman's training in dancing and fencing for the peasant who would perhaps be indifferent to the delicacy and refined taste of the noble people, perhaps considering the appearance of the noble person of bad taste in its affected form while the noble people would see the peasants' simple living as rough, poorly mannered, perhaps vulgar. They would not share the same taste.

The motive for enabling prediction with the help of machine learning is not for social skills and moral judgement but to answer consumers' desires and to stimulate and create them. The latter is very much the occupation for market research and advertising which can become revolutionized in the third stage of capitalism. Advertisers may hope to provide consumers with what they ask for, being there at the right time for the questions although this hope may often be in vain. What they can hope for now is to be there to provide consumers with what they want even before asking.

An example given by Hal Varian illustrates: "One day my phone buzzed and I looked at a message from Google Now. It said: "Your meeting at Stanford starts in 45 minutes and the traffic is heavy, so you better leave now." The kicker is that I had never told Google Now about my meeting. It just looked at my Google Calendar, saw where I was going, sent my current location and destination to Google Maps, and figured out how long it would take me to get to my appointment" (Varian 2014, 28).

I began with saying there is a problem with surveillance capitalism. Now I must emphasize that the problem relates to what happens to the formation of our predictability as individuals among others, the Humean premise for social interaction. I suggest focusing on taste for analysing how we currently form society and our ways of interacting and should repeat I do not find a difference from previous ages hence bringing in taste as a classic answer. The difference between a 21st century internet user and a peasant of previous ages is here a difference in material and technical living, not in how they become formed to live in their respectively cultures. The question is: which understanding of taste is implied in this suggestion?

3. Taste and Sensorial Formation

Taste is a social matter. We utter judgements of taste for others to respond to and we hope for, or perhaps it is better to say we desire, their consent. Through taste we demonstrate our relation to a community sharing this taste. Taste is, with Kant in mind,

a sign of man who is not merely man but a refined man, a man of civilisation (*Critique of Judgement* § 41). Tastes differ and often we come across that *de gustibus non est disputandum* and similar expressions, but in fact we do dispute and must dispute exactly because it is a social matter. We react to the other person that through concrete forms of appearances such as gesticulation, language, dress and accessories reveals a character. This is subject to different form of interests in current studies (e.g. Hennion 2007), but it is also ancient knowledge and one finds a fine and elaborate discussion in Baldesar Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*) from 1528. Appearance may be inappropriate for judging the other: "It does not seem fitting to me, or even customary among persons of worth, to judge the character of men by their dress rather than by their words or deeds"; however, it has to be admitted that "all these outward things [walking, laughing, looking] often make manifest what is within" (Castiglione 2002, 90). It could be that we are mistaken in our judgements, but we do begin by judging the book by its cover.

Because of its social significance a dominant discourse on taste becomes how well one performs in relation to the taste of one's community, i.e. whether someone has good taste! This aspect of taste leads to discussions of what qualifies the qualities, then called aesthetic, of something being a candidate for a judgement of taste; whether qualities and standards are in the object or a preference of the subject, whether they are about beauty and a specific form of appreciation and pleasure or intellectual – and similar questions.

I will not engage in these questions but instead direct focus to the sense of taste as an essential component in the judgement. By sense here I mean literally the sensing and not a metaphorical use of it. How and why the sense of taste came to be the model for aesthetic judgement is another story though it does relate to my focus. It is of interest that a change in our approach to taste appears in more recent centuries when it was no longer "a question of sampling or tasting a particular substance. The dominant construction of taste turned on preferences, on an innate taste or inclination *for* something" (Ferguson 2011, 376, emphasis in original). Such inclination is both sensorial and intellectual revealing a social sense which is as well an understanding of norms. "Internalized into the psyche and integrated into everyday social life, this worldly intelligence of taste determines how one acts and also how one thinks of oneself" (Ferguson 2011, 381). An inclination is obviously not a mere subjective statement; no one would take much interest in mere private preferences. It is an inclination we have because we learn to convert taste from a mere sensuous reaction to an evaluation of that same reaction which requires the refinement of taste that we call education (see also Hedegaard 2019).

There is a clear physical component in taste; strong spices like chili enjoyed in Thailand and eaten there also by children will make most Scandinavian adults cry in pain. However, explanations in physiological terms such as causal affection of taste buds and how they have become accustomed and have developed over time give little explanation to why we come to like what we like and furthermore also express preferences and evaluations of tastes. Demonstrating there is a stimulation of specific neural centres or chemical reactions does not tell us what that experience *means* to us. Neither do attempts of mapping some features of how individuals react to specific elements that are considered to precede any culturally biased production whether the reactions are of neural (Ramachandran & Hirstein 1999) or psychological (Green 1995) origin. Such attempts even prove to be themselves culturally biased in their choices of examples. They do not explain *why* a specific taste appears, only *that* patterns of reactions appear. Of course, they can argue that the answer to why we prefer specific tastes as well as proportions and compositions

originate in more fundamental features of, for example, biological or psychological form. Interesting as it can be to give a descriptive approach to what happens to the individual experiencing something and how deeply incorporated into our behavioural patterns it is, causing immediate and non-reflective reactions, it does not tell us why different cultures and individuals come to relate different impressions to different valuations.

Tastes are acquired through culturally informed practices and habits. Acknowledging difficulties in characterising what good taste is one could try approaching the issue from the opposite direction through what "is an uncontroversial characterization of bad taste based on widely agreed upon examples" (Goldman 2019, 13). However, this only proves that we agree to what is bad taste due to sharing a cultural background enabling us to consider the examples as examples of bad taste. The question of determining bad as well as good taste stays with us.

I believe we must deal with the cultural aspect of adjusting to something through exercises and practices – the learning aspect; and the sensorial in the literal sense with respect to taste.

Coffee can serve as example to combine this. We find many varieties to what kind of coffee is appreciated in different countries including how it is served and how it tastes. Denmark and Italy are two countries where a lot of coffee is consumed and two countries where coffee is also a strong social element. The coffee-break is essential in Danish work-life. Despite the name one can chose to drink tea instead – or not drink anything; but in some places one will also prove to be an outsider by drinking green tea instead. The coffee consumed will largely be different from the Italian; the Danish will traditionally be filtered and not espresso – though cultural habits change and change rather fast. What is appreciated and what one expects is a matter of background – including the fact that most of us probably did not like the taste of coffee as children and have learned to drink it.

If we establish this, it becomes important to understand what influences we are subject to forming our sensorial responses whether to hot, spicy food, coffee, popular cultural entertainment or art.

This brings back the point that taste is a social matter. Of course, one is alone in tasting coffee and likewise one is alone in listening to music, reading a novel and similar activities, but one is not alone in expressing what one thinks of them. I see others around me drinking coffee and reading Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie with, apparent, pleasure and expressing how they appreciate it but I may fail in my attempts of appreciating the same and perhaps be frustrated as I then fail to be part of what I believe to be the community of good taste. Or I may in the end form my own opinion and simply express how I prefer drinking tea and read Anurandha Roy and by that relate myself to discussions about tastes.

In both drinking and reading I look towards others for evaluation and expressing views; they give me standards and a language to communicate about taste and to pay attention to what it is my judgement of taste is about. My first tasting of wine did not include all the nuances of different grapes that I now have learned to pay attention to through a language of wine tasting. My training in reading literature has moved me from childhood stories to something different. This training has also given me a foundation for evaluation of narratives that may be (too) difficult to understand being of a new and unexperienced kind or coming from a different cultural setting than mine. I may easily, with Alan Goldman above in mind, come to judge them to be poor in quality.

In any case it is a matter of learning, exercises and practices. Exercises because it is no mere instruction; we do not have manuals for good taste simply to follow and we all

know how we can utter a statement of taste that others do not agree with. The question is what the sources of learning today are? At least one answer will be the massive presence of stimulations for consuming. Users of information technology are subject to an almost permanent influence exercised by the providers of these services.

4. Sensorial Education and Consumer Culture

Exercises are essential for learning and this applies to taste in a very concrete sense. Wine does not taste good to most people in the beginning – children would prefer something different, and after learning to appreciate wine we can proceed to learn about nuances in tastes. We may find our personal preferences while also learning about what 'one' should prefer – and we can surrender our taste to what we believe to be the norm, or we can acknowledge the 'norm' still liking it different. The exercise thus also matters for more than the taste buds, they concern the judgement of qualities in cultural artefacts. The good wine at the social event, the dress of the guests, the conversation moving between appropriate subjects to maintain the social atmosphere reserving delicate or intimate talks to the proper moments, expressing cultivation in critical comments, etc. We slip from the simple sensorial impression into the standard discussion of taste.

Of interest is what forms the foundation for the exercises we have made and the knowledge we bring with us to enable our judgements. Emphasizing the social aspect of the judgement of taste it is our experiences and our ability to orientate among others and reflect what we judge to be the ideals and norms to adapt and turn into ours to acquire good taste. Two implications are to be addressed here, one only with a brief statement, the other as essential for my argument.

The brief statement is how this combination of foundation, influence, exercise and judgement points towards the formation of our sensorial and perceptual relation to the world due to influences we are subject to. If this was not the case, we would have no need for any learning process. From here on begins discussions about perception within both psychology and philosophy. Here it suffices to make a philosophical reference establishing the implications: "The first perception of colours properly speaking then, is a change of the structure of consciousness, the establishment of a new dimension of experience, the setting forth of an *a priori*" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 35, emphasis in original). "Nothing is more difficult than to know precisely *what we see*" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 67, emphasis in original). Following this line of thought, as I do, we learn to sense and perceive to make sense of what we encounter; and 'making sense of' alters our relation to phenomena – we learn to think.

Assuming the environment is essential for providing us with what we sense the other implication is about what it is that the environment provides us with? Furthermore, this is also a question of who or what forms the environment, i.e. a question of cultural, ideological and political structures. When I address surveillance capitalism, I speak of an environment of a capitalist economy which aspires to be present in each aspect of our lives. We become consumers with needs to answer, and not only are needs answered, they are created. A characteristic of Western Modernity is the transformation of natural needs into culturally created needs enhanced by modern forms of production. Needs must be historically or culturally created Marx would notice in *Grundrissen der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (*Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*) from 1857 (Marx 1983, 244); and to be able to explain how this cultural process continues beyond satisfying

needs in a race for surplus and perpetual economic growth, needs must be transformed into desires. Needs can be satisfied, but as Gernot Böhme emphasizes in what he calls aesthetic capitalism, "desires cannot be permanently satisfied, but only temporarily appeased, since they are actually intensified by being fulfilled" (Böhme 2017, 11).

Returning to the characteristics of surveillance capitalism the point about surveillance is to predict and, which is crucial, create consumers' desires and provide what will be wanted before consumers ask. The enormous amount of data collected is to answer what Zuboff calls the prediction imperative (Zuboff 2019, 197 ff.). It is parallel to Hume's comment on predicting peoples' behaviour as fundamental to any social relation only Zuboff asks for paying attention to how the parallel collapses when it is not for moral principles in a community but for generating profit for the data collectors. The third and last part of her book is dedicated to discussing the consequences in what she in the sixth definition of surveillance capitalism calls instrumentarian power: "*the instrumentation and instrumentalization of behavior for the purposes of modification, prediction, monetization, and control*" (Zuboff 2019, 352, emphasis in original). While predictions are difficult and insecure, surveillance capitalism submerges the consumer in suggestions based on the predictions to an extent where one is barred from alternatives – at least it requires an effort to access alternatives. In this way predictions will eventually become self-fulfilling prophecies. Services appearing as assisting us (Varian 2014, 29) are veiled in seductive terms such as smart and personalization. Smart is to make the user "a hapless puppet dancing to the puppet master's hidden economic imperatives" (Zuboff 2019, 237), and personalization is the "machine invasion of human depth [...] a slogan that betrays the zest and cynicism brought to the grimy challenge of exploiting second-modernity needs and insecurities for outsize gain" (Zuboff 2019, 255).

Our social skills are learned and trained in relation to the social environment and the experiences we make, and they are all subject to how family, friends, colleagues and strangers act and respond to our presence. Other peoples' reactions and utterances influence us, and this is no different in real life or mediated communication. But what the latter can do is to influence what communication we have, what we hear about, and what influencing information we get in a scale earlier forms of mass communication would never come close to and in a way undetectable for the subject of influence. Large scale experiments of this kind have been conducted, like what the 2010 experiment with 61 million Facebook users at the 2010 US congressional elections apparently is showing – apparently while the authors are careful to not conclude too much to instead express suggested forms of influences (Bond, Fariss, Jones 2012).

What becomes essential then is to see how surveillance capitalism comes to play a role, and possibly a dominant role, in many individuals' relation to their environment, at least when they are consumers and users of internet services. This calls for an awareness of the extent to which our environment can be formed by media and for ways of addressing this influence. If, as I have stressed several times, this is no different from what we have always done, and if the sensorial formation of the environment and our relation to it is also what we have always dealt with in relation to taste, then taste seems to offer a critical approach and to prove it matters in contemporary critique of culture.

5. Taste as a Critical Approach to Surveillance Capitalism

So, taste matters today! The sensorial formation we are subject to, teaching us how to sense and perceive and how to express our sensorial relation to the environment in a

judgement of taste, is a formation that calls for a critique of the cultural conditions influencing us in this process. Discussions of taste take many forms depending on ideals of norms and standards for evaluating the sensorial influences, and such evaluation determine what is considered to qualify as aesthetic qualities. I will conclude with suggesting how this aspect of taste may help us in forming a critical view on cultural phenomena like surveillance capitalism.

Perhaps we should be reminded of the hermeneutic principle: one understands an expression (a text, work of art, design solution etc.) by understanding it as an answer to a question and the interpretative task is to find out what the question was. What is it a judgement of taste should answer? Establishing it as a social activity expressing orientation, understanding and position within a community the judgement answers a specific discourse of cultural interpretation. Uttering my judgement of taste, I place myself in relation to others demonstrating I have learned to appreciate something like they do – whether it is coffee or artworks.

Because of this social positioning and expected recognition from others, we may sometimes be too occupied with finding the true position and demonstrate our successful conforming to the rules. 'Too occupied' means we prioritise socialising over a critical approach to our environment. Although it will often be important to conform to and go along with the social environment, it does not imply that we always should. Being a consumer is one way of demonstrating one's ability in playing social games, as for example demonstrated in fashion. But we also need to be able to understand with what rules we play and what interests may be found hidden in them. In any social relation there will also be elements of power, and the element of power in surveillance capitalism is one of holding the consumer in a firm grip to enhance further consuming and seal off other forms of influence. Zuboff indicates the countermove: "Individual awareness is the enemy of telestimulation because it is the necessary condition for the mobilization of cognitive and existential resources" (Zuboff 2019, 306). I suggest taste matters as a countermove here.

In the discussion of taste, it is worth drawing a parallel to art discourses concerning the desire for social recognition. Do we, to make it short, appreciate the artwork in the judgement we make, or do we in fact ask to be recognized as art-lovers? The latter may be the actual outcome in more contexts like Hans-Georg Gadamer makes us aware of in what he calls the aesthetic consciousness (Gadamer 1993). The art-lover seeks to demonstrate education and knowledge of how to speak about art but may in fact prove to be more in love with the ability of performing the institutionalized art discourse. The art-lover is here trapped in what different forms of avant-garde art have struggled with, the institutional imprisonment of art. The discourse on taste becomes a confirmation of the established ideals for judging art and cultural ideals. It neglects or ignores how some forms of art may ask something of us, even demand something – like questioning our cultural ideals.

Consequently, one prevalent understanding of the relation to art is how art, and discourses on art, are free of interests in profane forms of use. Art is, in this view, primarily for the sake of cultural value, not for the utility of society, social position, or economic investments. Not that art is useless; some will argue art's utility is to question prejudices and different cultural forms, to address questions of human existence, to add different perspective to our world and lives and such 'noble' uses. Nevertheless, appreciation of art may sometimes prove to be more of a self-confirmation expressed, than it is a self-critique provoked by the questions that art can raise. Despite agreeing to the cultural

use, or importance, of art, many discourses on art keep distance from the critical reflection of art directed towards oneself to instead praise its freedom imprisoned in cultural ideals. To be educated in the good taste of the community, including the community of the cultural critique, is not always to be prepared to pull the carpet from under the critical feet. But if the education does not imply the latter and makes one question oneself, if the education does not make one try and think for oneself, the education is only half complete. The education becomes then one of what Theodor Adorno calls half-education (*Halbbildung*), one where one appears as educated by performing well on cultural parameters but proves to be no self-critical and autonomous individual (Adorno 1975, 66 ff.).

Taste, thus, proves to matter in two ways. One of analysing what we actual do in our efforts of making judgements of taste to position ourselves in the cultural environment and social relations we live in. Taste has a descriptive side to it and one where we should become aware of how the environment affecting us and forming our senses and perception is brought to existence. In the age of surveillance capitalism and its users of internet-connected services this existence is largely provided by tech companies based on their data collection used to predict needs and furthermore provide answers to the needs and create further desires in an ongoing and self-fulfilling machine.

Taste matters also in another way, namely as a possible critical approach to this mechanism of social-integration Taste enables us to question, to exchange experiences in critical discourses, to challenge and reveal the premises we work on, the prejudices we carry with us and the ideals we tend to follow. In that light we should not be mystified about discussing taste in relation to surveillance capitalism; we should instead be mystified about the absence of taste in this context.

(I would like to thank Maggie Jackson for help with the language.)

Copenhagen, Denmark

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Aesthetic Taste Now: A Look Beyond Art and the History of Philosophy

MICHAEL R. SPICHER

Abstract

Aesthetic taste rose to prominence in the eighteenth century, and then quickly disappeared. Since the start of the 2000s, scholars have slowly returned to the main traditional concepts in aesthetics—beauty, the sublime, and aesthetic experience. Aesthetic taste, however, has lagged behind. I focus on two explanations for this downturn: aesthetics is too often associated with art alone and taste is thought to have no connection with anything objective. In this paper, I suggest that theories of aesthetic taste are still valuable. While tastes will surely differ, individuals should explore the ways that their life and circumstances affect their taste and how they can become more intentional about developing their taste. Using prisons, engineering, and business, I show how theories of aesthetic taste can enter the contemporary scene by suggesting ways that it can influence their respective practices.

Introduction

Theory and practice have a reciprocal relationship, and people (whether they realize it or not) assume theories of taste in their practices. Rather than applying aesthetic theories blindly, we would benefit from identifying and refining their use. What does it mean, for example, for someone to have taste? Does it matter whether someone likes clothes from Walmart or Bloomingdales? Does it tell us anything significant if someone likes pop music or jazz? People have strong opinions—very strong—about their preferences concerning music, clothing, movies, and so on. (Just tell a Beatles fan that they are overrated!) Even if they don't directly use the word 'taste,' in everyday discussions and interactions people continue to speak meaningfully about having "good" and "bad" taste. By contrast, academic and research contexts have shown little interest about what might count as taste.[1] Since it is so pervasive in popular culture, it seems strange to ignore it; we should not give up on working through theories of taste. Businesses, governments, and other organizations would be wise to consider the aesthetic in their products, practices, and policies. Being able to predict people's tastes would certainly be valuable to groups or organizations. While that perfect knowledge of people's preferences is not forthcoming, that fact does not preclude theories of taste from being beneficial for professional practices. In terms of theory, philosophers—for example, Edmund Burke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant—made significant advances for taste during the eighteenth century. Following the prevalence during that century, theories of taste dropped out of intellectual discourse almost as quickly as they had arisen. By the nineteenth century,

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aesthetic taste had been replaced by the notion of an aesthetic attitude as seen in the work of Edward Bullough and Arthur Schopenhauer. Since then, theories of taste have only surfaced here and there, but mostly with a nod to the history of philosophy.

There may be several causes for this downturn. Two are worth noting here: aesthetics is too often associated with art alone (which tends to be more about expression) and taste is considered to be merely subjective. I will explain each of these concerns and show why they are not as problematic and should be overcome. I will also offer an important aspect of how our taste develops, namely how our relations with other people influences our taste. While usually focused on art, aesthetic taste should extend into other areas of life, even some unexpected ones. Businesses, for example, can learn to harness aesthetic qualities to create dynamic experiences for their customers and provide them with a sense of a relationship with their company, which would provide another dimension to their business practices. Aesthetic excellence is becoming a more important factor as consumers want less stuff and more of an experience. I conclude this essay with some suggestions for how and why aesthetic taste could be useful for prisons, engineering, and business.

The Emergence of Taste

For many thinkers prior to the modern era, taste was not a huge concern because beauty was objective and associated frequently with truth and goodness. If you understood the truth, for example, then you would be able to experience the higher or more perfect forms of beauty. In the *Symposium*, Plato writes that people first experienced the beauty of an individual, then multiple individuals, then finally, building on these earlier encounters, reached the higher beauties, "climbing up like rising stairs."[2] It wasn't until subjectivity became a possibility, and people became more central than an external, transcendent idea or being, that they began to develop *theories* of taste. George Dickie underscores this development in the title of his 1995 book about the eighteenth century, *The Century of Taste*. Writing in that century, Joseph Addison may have been the first to discuss taste as the beholder's psychological response to a work of literature. He wrote about this idea for the *Spectator* in 1712. One question that emerged from this is whether taste is something innate that we access by experience or something that is developed through reason. Rather than recounting all of the theories of taste from the eighteenth century, it is sufficient to say that the modern era introduced two camps: those who believed that taste was innate and those who believed it was developed through reason.[3] As aesthetic taste is a metaphor based on the physical sense of taste, many have considered aesthetic taste to be a kind of internal sense, that it is innate. In a work of prose, called *The Moralists*, Shaftesbury's main character Theocles makes the case for beauty being connected to goodness and discovered through the use of a moral sense. This helped promote the connection between being virtuous and the capacity for experiencing the beautiful. Regardless of whether this connection holds, the key idea here is that the ability to judge the beauty of something is innate. But this does not mean the capacity for aesthetic judgment is infallible; it needs to be developed through experience. Nor do we have to believe that being virtuous is a necessary precondition, as Shaftesbury did. All this view necessitates is a belief that the capacity for taste is something people are born with and develop.

To counter Shafesbury's notion of an innate sense of taste, Moses Mendelssohn wrote "On Sentiments," which is told through a series of letters. As a staunch rationalist,

Mendelssohn has his Theocles[4] describe in a letter how he prepares himself to have an aesthetic experience. The experience of the aesthetic is not something that passively happens to someone, like placing food on the tongue; Mendelssohn asserts that the beholder has to take preemptive reasonable steps to be ready for the experience. Even though the subjectivity of taste had not taken over, as both Shaftesbury and Mendelssohn held onto some objective components of beauty, this division between an internal sense and an outward looking rationality set the stage for the objective-subjective debate.

While in many ways opposing, what connects Shaftesbury's emphasis on innateness and Mendelssohn's emphasis on rationality is that, in either view, *experience is always necessary*. Taste in an immediate situation might have more to do with our feelings than with our mind; however, this does not mean that we can't develop it, over time, through our choices. In other words, there is no reason we should be passive about what influences our taste. We may not be able to control some external influences, but we can control how we seek out new experiences and objects for our attention.

While useful for their integration of experience, these eighteenth century discussions on taste also brought beauty to the cusp of being understood as something wholly subjective. Philosophers took note of this. In his overview of beauty, Crispin Sartwell notes, for example, that both "Hume and Kant perceived that something important was lost when beauty was treated merely as a subjective state."[5] Why, then, has the same care not been afforded to taste? Even today it seems like no one has thought anything was (or is) lost if we think about taste as completely subjective.

The Disappearance of Taste

Almost as quickly as they appeared, new theories of taste vanished from the scene. This is not to say that no one spoke about taste ever again. But even a cursory look reveals few sustained attempts at advancing theories of taste or its role in our lives. Part of this diminishing is the fact that people's interests change, and they move onto other theories or concepts. The more curious thing, for me, is why taste doesn't seem as significant (compared to its heyday) *even as a concept* in philosophy (especially aesthetics) any more. The main concepts in aesthetics—beauty, the sublime, and aesthetic experience—have cycled through being viewed as important and less important. However taste seems to have been omitted from even smaller this rise and fall. Since 2000, Roger Scruton, Nick Zangwill, Emily Brady, and Richard Shusterman have all contributed to the revitalization of beauty, sublime, and aesthetic experience.[6] By contrast, the only new direction aesthetic taste seems to have taken is through the relationship between it and gustatory taste, which Carolyn Korsmeyer[7] has written about. However, even here the focus seems to be on whether food and drink are like art, rather than what is the nature of aesthetic taste in itself. In other words, while gustatory taste may prove a new and interesting avenue of exploration, it is not focused on the theories of taste as such. So what happened to that once burgeoning concept? I suggest two things hinder the contemporary field of aesthetics from developing theories of taste: aesthetics is too often associated with art alone and taste is thought to have no connection with anything objective.

In the beginning of her book *Everyday Aesthetics*, Yuriko Saito explains that aestheticians claim that aesthetics extends beyond art, but in practice the majority of discussions still center around art. "An underlying assumption seems to be that art, however it is defined, provides the model for aesthetic objects, and the aesthetic status of things outside the

artistic realm is determined by the degree of their affinity to art."[8] Bence Nanay has similarly written: "Aesthetics is not the same as philosophy of art. Philosophy of art is about art. Aesthetics is about many things—including art."[9] Aesthetics includes experiences of nature, design, craft, and more. The discourse of aesthetics has already begun to change, but we need to continue to rethink (and explore) the possibilities of how aesthetics affects different areas. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is almost universal agreement about nature in terms of taste. However, when it comes to art and other human-made objects, divergent tastes invariably emerge.[10] Since this is the case—that tastes differ to a greater degree about artifacts—then people may have deliberately, or even subconsciously, stopped devoting energy to unravel the nature of taste because it seemed like a futile exercise. It's not a very stimulating observation to say that people agree about sunsets being beautiful, but almost nothing else. And, since contemporary definitions of art emphasize expression, institutions (i.e., the artworld), and history, aesthetic taste is not important for determining the value of a work of art anyhow. While art doesn't seem as concerned with aesthetics anymore (though aesthetic theories of art would not agree), it is not as decisive as it first appears. First, there are some characteristics or conditions that are commonly found in the artifacts that are widely considered beautiful. For example, proportion has a long history of being associated with beauty. Other candidates might be wholeness, radiance, and fittingness.[11] Second, recent studies in perception have shown that the more often we encounter a work of art (whether visual or musical), the more we tend to like it.[12] So, disagreeing about some works of art can sometimes be the result of a lack of enough experience with the given work, genre, or cultural style. Listening to Indian hand drumming might be jarring at first to a Westerner, but hearing enough of it could change one's mind about it. In other words, there is a sense that we have to be 'used to' something in order to like it. Even in cases where we see something for the first time and instantly love it, there are likely background experiences that led up to that liking. There is more agreement about the beauty of artifacts within a specific culture. Since there was such a focus on art and high culture in the eighteenth century theories of taste, it may be good that these discussions waned a bit, so that we can rethink taste in the twenty-first century. And this segues into the next concern about developing taste, despite its subjective underpinning.

The Development of Taste

In these last two sections, I show that developing taste is possible and important for the individual, and then suggest three non-art contexts in which considering aesthetic taste would be beneficial for practical goals. To start, consider three overlapping spheres of experience that influence or develop our taste: objects, culture, and relations. These three spheres are conceptually separable, but they largely work in conjunction with each other. Although taste is no longer regularly theorized in academic contexts, people continue to talk meaningfully about good and bad taste, even if they do not always employ the word 'taste.' Think about the rise of reality television and performance-based TV shows. We have shows where 'experts' come in to fix up your home and where 'judges' rate contestants who perform and show off their talents. There is a tacit assumption that the judges or home renovators have a higher degree of taste (or are more specially equipped) than most of us, even if we sometimes disagree with their decisions. While it seems clear that we won't uncover a magic formula for taste, this fact should not preclude

us from helpful ways to develop our own taste. By 'develop,' I do not necessarily mean upgrade, but rather deepen or expand one's taste.

Taste, much like art and beauty, is a flexible concept. It is not completely fixed, even if we can find some recurring conditions of widely regarded objects. While we may appeal to proportion for a condition of an object demanding good taste, we need to realize that it is also highly contextual what determines good or bad taste, which is part of the reason we should not consider this discussion over. Each time period could add its own unique flavor(s) for the grander theory of taste, in a continuous expansion. But we also see how traditional concepts, like proportion, take on new applications, even if the core meaning remains the same. Another aspect of the context of taste involves the development of new objects or artforms. In the eighteenth century, having good taste in an automobile was simply not possible. Prior to the 1930s, one did not have to consider whether the electric guitar made aesthetically pleasing music, let alone genres that emerged because of this invention (heavy metal, grunge, punk, etc.).

Thus, in order to develop taste in a particular area, it is important to experience *objects* from that area. I use objects somewhat loosely to include sounds, smells, and others along with material objects like paintings. Even literal taste, which is something people possess from birth, must be developed in certain ways. Few people immediately like Scotch, for example. And even if someone's first experience of Scotch was good, that person still must experience some different varieties to expand their palette to be able to perceive all the nuances in smell and flavor, such as sweet, smoke, and spice. And someone could not claim to be an aficionado of Scotch without a sufficient amount of experience tasting Scotch. Sometimes these aesthetic experiences may be deliberate, such as regularly going to art museums and galleries to see as many paintings as possible. Other times it may be more incidental. For example, in order to become an architect, one must be familiar with structure and design. In the process of rendering these elements, one would inadvertently (though it could also be deliberately) develop some level of taste about the built environment. One of the core ideas here is that taste is developed and expanded through habituation, in this case the habit of experiencing or becoming habituated to a certain kind of object.

Taste is not in itself an elitist concept, though it is certainly affected by one's *culture*. While it is true that taste has been used for racist and classist ends, those misuses are not intrinsic components of the *nature of taste.* In general, it's not surprising that people with more money have the opportunity to experience more art and nature than someone without as much means. And prior to the Internet, poorer people might not have had access to the knowledge that some works of art existed. Now even though Pierre Bourdieu[13] has shown that people of different social classes have different aesthetic preferences, this does not mean they are limited to these preferences. It is common for this to be directly related to one's social and economic standing; in other words, one's taste is determined by one's economic class. But this is not necessarily a strict rule. Bourdieu coined the idea of cultural capital—assets like education that help people transcend their economic status. Developing taste is affected by one's culture and cultural capital. One's culture is chiefly accidental, but that should not stop someone from working to expand their cultural capital through education and other means.

Along with objects and culture, our *relationships* have an acute impact on our taste. We could easily imagine someone being born poor, and then in college befriend someone from a wealthier background. Perhaps, this person from poorer means had never been to

an opera, and they attend with their new friend to discover that they love opera. This friendship, even if it eventually ends, has expanded this person's aesthetic taste by introducing opera. But it can be even simpler than this example. Even our close friends of a similar socio-economic status can have different circles that influence their taste (and potentially ours). When we trust our friend's taste, then we give more weight to their opinions about aesthetic objects, like movies and music. If our friend happens to see a movie first and says it's terrible, we may decide not to see it. And we may even tell others that it's terrible. This is not to say that we will have the same tastes as our friends or other relations, but just that they have an influence over us. We can see this idea at work in the context of Google searches. When using a search engine, people might think that page rank is the most important factor, since an overwhelming majority of traffic comes from the first five results. However, brand familiarity not only helps to determine this placement, but positively influences, more so even than page rank, whether users will ultimately purchase a product.[14] So, familiarity (friends, family, even brands) will have more influence over our aesthetic preferences. While we cannot control many factors, we should at least be aware of the ways they may influence our taste. All of these spheres of experiences work together to develop our aesthetic taste. These kinds of development are largely focused on impacting the individual, so we turn now to see how aesthetic taste can be relevant for other areas of society that are more communal or collaborative.

The Relevance of Taste

Primo Levi was a prisoner during the Holocaust in one of the most notorious concentration camps, Auschwitz. After being rescued and trying to get his life and health back together, he began to write about his experiences in Auschwitz. He recalled a time when he was walking with a fellow prisoner to pick up the daily ration of food for the group. While they were talking, it became apparent that his friend did not know much about Dante. So, Levi began reciting a portion from Dante. But he could not remember certain fragments of the text. In particular, he could not remember a crucial connecting line; he said he would have given up that day's soup, if only he could remember. Why? He wrote: "For a moment I forget who I am and where I am."[15] Perhaps, this would not be the specific thing you would long to remember, but it worked for Levi. I think this illustrates two main things. First, aesthetics matters for our well-being. People may attempt to claim that aesthetics is something added only after all our basic needs are met. Levi was in dire circumstances, but still turned to aesthetics to transcend (even for a moment) his surroundings. Second, we want to share our own aesthetic preferences with others, which will sometimes result in them sharing our preferences or rejecting them. Aesthetics matters for the community, whether it be friendship, business partners, fellow prisoners, or other collaborators.

Taste is a pervasive concept in our social interactions, and it can impact areas such as prisons, engineering, and business. In light of the story about Primo Levi, it should be no surprise that prisons could benefit from some aesthetic considerations. Aesthetic experience is a fundamental drive for people. Part of what is deprived of incarcerated persons in the United States is any aesthetic consideration in the design of prisons, which seem to be concerned only with function. Why should this matter, someone may suggest, they are prisoners? Well, among other reasons, recidivism rates are far lower in countries that do not have such dismal, anti-aesthetic conditions in their prisons. For example,

Norway boasts a twenty percent recidivism rate, one of the lowest in the world.[16] At least part of Norwegians' overall success is that they do not rob incarcerated persons of basic aesthetic considerations. Instead of bleak and dismal cells that work to dehumanize, their minimum security prisoners often have actual furnished rooms. This basic aesthetic arrangement helps them maintain their humanity,[17] rather than pushing them toward animalistic drives. The aesthetic features of their surroundings, along with other things, can work to restore the prisoner for a future back in society, rather than pushing them down further.

Engineering may seem like the application of math and science to solve practical problems, such as building bridges. But as we have seen, aesthetics permeates human existence. These practical problems that engineering seeks to solve are not devoid of social context, they are to satisfy human needs. And humans also need an aesthetic component to their surroundings.[18] In the context of engineering education, Per Boelskifte identifies the separation of aesthetics as a problem, showing how aesthetics was gradually removed from engineering textbooks.[19] He argues for reintroducing aesthetics into engineering education and at earlier stages of the design process. Boelskifte writes: "If aesthetics is understood as having to do with a high level perception of quality, it becomes evident that most engineering decisions may affect the aesthetics of a solution be it a product, a building, a ship or a system."[20] If aesthetics affects engineering outcomes and engineering decisions affect aesthetics, engineers ought to know about aesthetics. Toward this goal, they should have an understanding about aesthetic taste, relating to the culture and individuals in which their product or structure will be presented.

In the context of business, it would obviously be great to know people's tastes so that we could better attract and retain customer loyalty. We are not likely to gain perfect knowledge of everyone's tastes, but this does not mean theorists and practitioners couldn't develop some guiding principles and be willing to alter them as necessary. Taste does not develop in a vacuum. When giving a speech, instructors will point out that you need to know your audience. This advice applies to knowing your customers as well. However, knowing your customers is not only about knowing what services or products they want. This would limit you to function only, when the form (or aesthetics) of your product, practice, and user experience matter as well. Pauline Brown, in her book *Aesthetic Intelligence*, suggests that aesthetics will be a defining aspect of successful businesses in the coming years. An example that helps to illustrate how aesthetics can impact your business comes from Starbucks.[21] All of our senses come into play when experiencing the aesthetic aspect of an object, place, or event. When Starbucks first introduced their breakfast sandwiches, these treats possibly tasted good, but they had an all-too-dominant smell. Starbucks began to lose sales, so they quickly halted the sale of these sandwiches. It was (and is) important for Starbucks customers to smell the coffee, not sandwiches. Now it may seem obvious that people would prefer the coffee smell, but no one considered how the sandwiches would affect the coffee smell. After all, coffee has a fairly strong odor, which was the aesthetic experience the customers wanted.

If relationships are important for individuals to develop their taste, then businesses should also consider relationships (of a kind) with their customers or clients. Part of that includes the obvious idea of building relationships directly with people. But a global company, for example, could not possibly build relationships with all of its individual customers worldwide. Businesses can also connect with their clients or customers by giving them an experience, rather than a mere transaction. In *The Art Firm* by Pierre

Guillet de Monthoux, he claims, "Art had to work as a total experience."[22] More than ever, people are looking for experiences. And giving them one will help to differentiate your business from other similar businesses. How do you do it? Well, of course, it depends on your specific business. But one important aspect will be to see how you can appeal to as many senses as possible in your customers' experience. It is what could set you apart from your competition, especially if you otherwise offer similar services and comparable quality. This fuller experience is a way to give the customer or client the feeling of a relationship.

Conclusion

What has been shown here? While aesthetics has, to varying degrees, always had a place in philosophic inquiry, theories about aesthetic taste in particular have markedly declined since the eighteenth century. In order to show why theories of taste are still beneficial, I recounted two key beliefs concerning where taste begins, whether innately or by reason. In light of their historical context, these theories may seem far-removed from anything beneficial for practices in the current times. But theory (whether articulated or not) still grounds practice. As a way to exemplify this influence and bring the discussion into the present, I showed three ways that individuals can develop taste within three spheres of experience: objects, culture, and relationships. Because taste is not wholly an individualistic enterprise—it has a communal and cultural impact as well—I also introduced wider contexts that warrant further consideration: prison, business, and engineering. Space did not permit a complete presentation for how taste might impact these three contexts. My hope was more modest than that. Drawing on experts and fields outside of art and philosophy, I began to show that attention to aesthetic taste can help us make better decisions, create more equitable policies, develop higher quality products, and even attract more customers. It is my hope that this essay helps inspire people to reconnect and reconsider theories of taste as a viable project.

Boston Architectural College & *Massachusetts College of Art and Design, USA*

(I would like to thank Hannah Rose Goff Spicher for invaluable help in offering edits on this essay.)

Notes

[1] A recent book by Peter Kivy, *De Gustibus: Arguing about Taste and Why We Do It*, (Oxford University Press, 2015) is one of the few recent examples. However, despite using the word 'taste' in the title, he frames the discussion mostly around art and why we argue for our preferences in that context. So, I think he illustrates one of the problems with taste, that we, as I suggest in this article, need to move aesthetic discussions beyond art.

[2] Plato, *Symposium*, 211c.

[3] For more on the history of taste and its different theories, see Michael Spicher, "Aesthetic Taste," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://iep.utm.edu/a-taste/.

[4] In an example of a philosophical dis, Mendelssohn provides an introduction to the letters in which he claims that his Theocles travelled to a country (presumably Germany) where they valued accurate thinking over simply free thinking.

[5] Crispin Sartwell, "Beauty," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/beauty/>.

[6] For example, Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Richard Shusterman and Adele Tomlin, editors, *Aesthetic Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[7] Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[8] Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14.

[9] Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4.

[10] Edward A. Vessel, Natalia Maurer, Alexander H. Denker, and G. Gabrielle Starr, "Stronger shared taste for natural aesthetic domains than for artifacts of human culture," in *Cognition*, 179 (2018), 121-131.

[11] Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 28.

[12] Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics*, 82.

[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

[14] Rebecca Sentance, "*2% of Searchers Choose a Familiar brand for a First Click [Study]" in *Econsultancy*, October 29, 2018, https://econsultancy.com/82-percent-searchers-choose-familiar-brand-search/

[15] Primo Levi *If This is a Man and The Truce*, translated by Stuart Woolf (London: Abacus, 2009), 119.

[16] Christina Sterbenz, "Why Norway's Prison System is so Successful," *Business Insider* (December 11, 2014), https://www.businessinsider.com/why-norways-prison-system-is-so-successful-2014-12

[17] For a discussion about aesthetics in prison, see Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[18] See, for example, Rolf Faste, "The Role of Aesthetics in Engineering," in *Japan Society of Mechanical Engineers (JSME) Journal* (Winter, 1995).

[19] Per Boelskifte, "Aesthetics and the Art of Engineering," in *Artifact*, Volume III, Issue 2, (2014), 2.1-2.10.

[20] Ibid., 2.1.

[21] Pauline Brown, *Aesthetic Intelligence: How to Boost It and Use It in Business and Beyond* (New York: Harper Business, 2019), 47.

[22] Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, *The Art Firm: Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing* (Stanford: Stanford Business Books, 2004), 120.

Book Reviews

LITERARY ALLUSION IN HARRY POTTER. By Beatrice Groves. London, UK: Routledge, 2017. 196 p.

Books allude to—that is, clarify, complete, compete with, glorify, plagiarize, misread, reinvent, and transmogrify—other books. Books which relentlessly allude to other books include James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). When we see the imprints of earlier books in books that we read, we imagine books existing in relationship to one another as part of a given order. This order changes, especially when books travel from one country or continent to another—one kind of reading culture to another—due to the work of traders, travellers, warriors, colonizers, etc. The spirit of books referring to other books is not always one of 'congenial ancestry,' as Pound called it, though it need not necessarily be burdened by what Bloom once called 'anxiety of influence'.

J K Rowling's comments on what she owes to books are well-documented, though one need not always accept her own mapping of her intent in relation to specific allusions. Beatrice Groves, in her *Literary Allusion in Harry Potter* (2017), offers a fascinating interpretation of the cultural logic of allusion. She tries to show why books are by nature filiatory, bound in a genealogy that can only be confirmed on scrutiny. Groves shows a clear mapping of the borrowings, though each cluster of borrowings has a different interpretive or cultural logic.

How straightforward is a book's relation to a culture or a reader? We know that children's literature is not for children alone. If anybody was looking for an instance to show the ambiguous relationship of children's literature to children, one need not go farther than this quixotic declaimer in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, decidedly one of the great books for children: "NOTICE: Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot. BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR PER G.G., CHIEF OF ORDNANCE" (2).

Interestingly, Twain's novel—presented to children the world over as a classic children's text—is also read, marketed and taught as a great American classic, presumably to and by adults. This is an issue that relates to the general perception—suspicion may be a better word here—that parents read more *Harry Potter* than children. There is a sly and subtle hint behind this suggestion that children 'watch' or 'play' rather than 'read' their books, *Harry Potter* included. This also relates to common perceptions on why books are written or read. Socially inclined literary critics suggest that writers, especially writers like Rowling, are keen on transforming and transferring the energy of great literature to young adults and their parents. It is clear, however, that Rowling does so in a form that is seemingly friendlier and less invasive in 'an age of mechanical production'—this with due apologies to Walter Benjamin—and digital re-production.

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As I read this fine book by Groves—which, I believe, will please more literary critics and teachers of literary-cultural production than diehard *Harry Potter* fans—I am also persuaded to ask a few questions.

If children see things 'differently,' do they see it independently as well? Do children's novels disguise, and then push, narratives of the nation, as novels are supposed to, if Bhabha is to be believed? What do children get to read first, and how? Do children's books teach children to invest in books that can get increasingly complex, both in pattern and rhythm? What do classics mean to a child? How are classics received in different homes, levels, classes? Is the adult reception of classics an overarching factor in what children get to read first as children's literature and later as literature? How does a child see Homer, Shakespeare, Austen, Dickens, ghost and fantasy novels, and the great European classics, in this case gift-wrapped by Rowling?

What we call 'different' in the cognitive universe of children stems from the presumption that a good deal of what children think and do remains potentially unaffected by the action and thought of elders. This is where what children think and read is filtered in different ways by the choices made for them by the adult world. This is also where books come in—the stories that children read or get to hear from playgroups and classmates—as ideologically refracted categories.

So J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* books not only tell beautiful and dark stories of good and evil wizards but also of social and cultural expectations—Terry Eagleton once called this exercise 'the ideology of the aesthetic'—through direct and indirect allusions to fables and folktales, epics, romances, novels, plays and poems. Groves says that 'Allusion comes naturally to Rowling' (xii); that it is a 'companionable idiom' (xiv). The key is linking the past to the present. Homer, Ovid, Plato, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Walpole, Austen, Dickens, Tennyson—and the Bible—form part of a family storehouse from which she borrows. Harry and his parents, Dumbledore, the Malfoys, Hagrid, Voldemort, Longbottom, Lupin, the Blacks, the Weasleys, Hermione, Snape—to name the most famous characters in what is Rowling's Potteriad—have been named after some of the most fascinating characters seen across the Western Canon. While Groves is mostly right and thorough on the tricks that Rowling lovingly performs to hide—and show—what she has taken from the great ancestry, the more remarkable feat relates to the transformation of the borrowed material.

For example, when names come from Homer, they also come with a certain narrative structure that depends on repetition and flash-back. When 'doubles' come from Shakespeare and Boccaccio, they come with the additional contrastive reminders of differences between names and qualities. Harry Bolingbroke (Prince Hal) and Harry Percy (Hotspur) carry similar names—in Shakespeare's Henriad—but stand for two different kinds of manhood. Harry Potter does not have the desperate valour of Hotspur and yet has a humane side that makes him a more acceptable hero.

Harry carries a scar like Odysseus' scar that not only reminds us of his heroic lineage but also gives him a pre-assured fictional destiny. As Grover argues, instances of cratylic naming in *Harry Potter* show Rowling's 'interest in the mechanics of society' (27). So Hagrid and Lupin suffer because of their otherness. Merope Gaunt, married to an outsider, dies in misery, much the same way as Ovid's Merope fades in the sky. Narcissa Malfoy, named after Narcissus, is beautiful but her 'beauty is marred by her disdain of others' (30). Harry and Ron are linked through reflections that lead them through Erised (desire reversed), but each has a different understanding of the images they see.

Harry's forbears, friends, adversaries and mentors owe a lot to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and to Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*. These medieval texts not only give Rowling the ideas with which to mould Good and Evil, but also fashion for her a model battlefield where they can fight. Whether *The Philosopher's Stone* or *The Chamber of Secrets* or *The Deathly Hallows*, these books show why it is important for a human being—more so for Harry, the contemporary teenager's Everyman—to accept mortality. Rowling's allusions to Milton and the mystery plays reiterate the long shadow of Christianity but insist on the power of kindness. Although human beings cannot immediately see the meaning of God's design, Rowling says that 'the darkness has no power over light' (79).

The presence in Rowling's novels of Shakespeare and Jane Austen is clearly the strongest. Shakespeare shows how love and forgiveness help one transcend worldly worries and transform ordinary mortals to heroes. The magic of words in Shakespeare's comic and tragic-comic art resonates in Harry, Hermione, Ron, Dumbledore, the Blacks and the Weasleys, in that they see how all interpretations are at once meaningful and inconclusive. Jane Austen—but mostly Emma—gives Rowling the model for a narratorial authority that is at once intelligent, ironical, sly and all-knowing. Even then the author finds for herself a corner where she can look at and laugh at her creations and turn them into better human beings. Much of the education of the younger characters of *Harry Potter* is like that of Emma Woodhouse. So, more than wealth, what the good characters finally get is wisdom.

If wisdom is the key to happy conclusions, grief has its moment in Rowling's work. But this note of grief comes with a disclaimer. Grief is not to be seen as that which follows death or separation, but that which serves as a reminder of something valuable. The words of a poet can immortalize the love of a mother, the touch of a friend, the softness of a child's feet. In Shakespeare's sonnets and in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, there is a guaranteed cyclicality of love's end and resurrection. To this extent, art is seen by Rowling—as it was by Shakespeare and Dickens—as therapeutic and mnemonic. All memory of the dead is like the memory of Morrison's Beloved. It provides an occasion to re-member the dead through words, through images, but most importantly through resurrection by allusion.

So the dead in *Harry Potter*, the writer tells us, cannot die. It is instructive to see how Groves discusses Harry's discovery of his mother's letter in *Deathly Hallows* (see Groves 146-48). Harry does not immediately get to the message in the letter. Rather, he looks at his mother's handwriting: 'a friendly little wave glimpsed from behind a veil' (Groves 146). But Harry does not despair for long. He connects to 'voices behind the veil' and feels his mother's love returning to him by way of his empathy for Luna. In Tennyson, grief is a great binder that holds the poem together. In Rowling, grief is a passage to companionship. It holds the key to the power of allusions.

In her *Guide to the Harry Potter Novels* (2002), Julia Eccleshare mentions two general perceptions about children that govern the production and indeed the consumption of children's literature. There is a feeling that today's children are 'brattish, selfish, consumerist, uncaring and greedy' (109). There is also a feeling that the world where children were supposed to be creative, free and safe—though the creativity, freedom and safety of the children were as much subject to ideological apparatuses as that of their parents—is dead. This has made children 'bewildered and unhappy while parental fears for safety [have] restricted independent activity' (109). Eccleshare examines the social formations surrounding children's fiction both as condition and consequence. Groves never says anything explicitly regarding how and where children get their ideas regarding

great books, great countries and great heroes before they start reading—and how and where they get their reading and what they read as they move on—but she insists on the role played by books in the lives of parents and children.

Rowling's *Harry Potter* is a great vehicle for transmitting narratives of imagined communities and national cultures. The Potter project is as much about national concerns as about the consumption culture of children. That, of course, brings us to the life-world of children, the world that they inherit, the world that they inhabit, and the world that they leave behind as they grow out of their childhood. These novels, therefore, can be said to play out the cultural logic of a world where, one would assume, children are more interested in watching films or playing digital games—not discounting the fact that the participation of children in digital productions has an air of malevolence about it—rather than reading books.

While any kind of conclusion pertaining to what children like—or do not—requires more evidence than literary criticism tends to offer or use, I see what kind of role parents and parenting plays in such a scenario. Books play the role of surrogate parents. The fact that Rowling has repeatedly mentioned the huge role played by books in her formative years sometimes occludes the fact that she is a voracious reader of books, and that she is drawn to books of all kinds as if by instinct. Yet, to think of her encounter with books as fortuitous happenings—as a series of happy accidents in the life of a successful writer—would be to ignore the essence of Rowling's basic understanding of a writer's calling.

To Rowling, the writer reads—and reads more than every other—so she can write, entertain and instruct. I cannot decide on a pecking order for Rowling's preferences for the ideal artist, if one were hard-pressed to choose between artists of pleasure and of persuasion. But whatever path the writer chooses, the presence of books—and that is where allusions become conditions and consequences of reading—is a fundamental principle in their expressive universe. So we are back to where we began: there are other books in the books we read. We needed Beatrice Groves to say *that* with such beauty and clarity. This is a rare book of literary criticism that one is happy to read, and recommend to other people, including Harry Potter readers.

BIJAY K. DANTA
Tezpur University, India

LITTÉRATURE ET POLITIQUE EN OCÉANIE. (Literature and Politics in Oceania).Special Volume of New Zealand Journal of French Studies. Eds. Andréas Pfersmann and Titaua Porcher. Wellington, NZ: Victoria University of Wellington, 2019. 266 p.

Most books, and this is especially true of academic research, are meant to be consumed by like-minded readers living in the time and place of their writing. Yet it occurred to me while reading *Littérature et politique en Océanie*, edited by Andréas Pfersmann and Titaua Porcher, that putting as wide a historical distance between ourselves and the volume could enhance our understanding—that to contemplate from afar what exercised the Western academic mind circa 2020 might allow the impartial curiosity needed when, as the title informs us, politics is at play.

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Littérature et politique en Océanie is a collection of essays in both French and English on the topic of the Pacific and the peoples of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and Australasia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Among all the hopes and affections and disaffections **of** Pacific islanders, one seems to matter most to the academic mind of the twenty-first century: the exploration and appropriation of the Pacific archipelagoes by European powers in the era of sail and steam ships, and the post-colonial scars it left behind. It is the historical catastrophe with respect to almost all that is said and denounced and regretted in the volume draws impetus. Far from this reviewer to deny its significance. The lives of Pacific islanders have been forever altered by the encounter. And as always since time immemorial, the more organized and technologically advanced group prevailed over the unprepared. Oceania is now a region of the world half-way Europeanized, ruefully, grudgingly, fatalistically, or stoically as the case may be.

Morality regrets the cultural contagion universally effected by the strong and the restless over the tranquil. In practice, however, it is not clear what alternative there is for it. Suffice to say that when one group of human beings devised fast-sailing high-tonnage vessels, fire arms, and a taste for knowledge and enterprise, it was a matter of time before adventuring and voracity led them to come in contact with a happily less restive people. It is also a matter of course that this contact would alter the knowledge, self-understanding, and practical reality of those who did not ask for the visit.

The outcome was catastrophic on ancestral ways of living—so the professoriate of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries religiously remembers, and asks the European soul to contemplate and repent. Still, if repentance is the object, it probably behooves the moralist to describe a viable alternative scenario. Suppose that, equipped with the foreknowledge of future post-colonial theories, explorers of the eighteenth century had decided to give native islanders a wide berth, and that, in the name of cultural sovereignty, they vowed to keep Pacific islands untouched; and suppose also that this resolve would have been honored down the generations, and enforced against privateering and commercial navigation and evangelical missions by a ring of gunboats and tough international laws drawn into an invisible cordon around the Oceanic archipelagos. How unlikely is it that the academic discussion of choice today would be about the evil of isolationism—in the implausible case that the isolation would successfully prevent the notoriously highseas-faring Pacific islanders from sailing outside their protected bubble, lest they meet the West? Post-isolationist studies would nowadays thunder against the callous moral egotism and dereliction of humanity of Europeans who, to appease their conscience, locked native populations in cultural isolation—there to practice slavery, cannibalism, human sacrifice, chieftain rule, the subjugation of females, and the destruction of the malformed well into the twenty-first century. One would be tempted to agree with the post-isolationist scholar that all these are a hefty price to ask others to pay so as to keep one's conscience in pristine condition. And the post-isolationist scholar would be right to suggest that at the very least we might have asked the natives what course of action *they* wanted to take. But of course to ask such a question is to tell them about our existence, which is the first step towards changing them.

The change that occurs when two alien peoples meet is the Fall of Man of today's academic literature: unavoidable, yet inexhaustibly repentable. In the pulpit of reprobation is where we find the twenty-first century scholar ensconced for now and the foreseeable future. Clerical habits seem to die hard among the intelligentsia, especially when the demand for guilt runs so high in our supposedly post-Christian sensibility (Nietzsche sobs in his grave).

This, of course, is not to say that the essayists of *Littérature et politique en Océanie* aren't correct about the facts of colonialism. There is no defensible reason why a people self-endowed with a *civilizing* mission, let alone one that touts the universal rights of man, should have so debased the meaning of civilization as to intimidate, expropriate, forcibly acculturate, and infantilize other nations. This, surely, is a blot on the European bill of health. At the same time, it should be admitted that if Europe accepts the blame, it surely credits its desire for moral improvement. Even a casual knowledge of world history tells us that whenever the war-like descended on the meek in the past, it was with the intoxicating sense of doing what was right. Not to trample the weak, who had ever heard of such a thing?

Well, that it is such a thing is a notion of the modern Christian-humanistic West, which, if it has failed to live up to its moral ideals, also salaries an intellectual class to prosecute this failure in the public square. This should speak rather in its favor.

Europe's colonization of half the globe in the nineteenth century is the unsurmountable event through which most contributors to *Littérature et politique en Océanie*, many of them literary critics, sieve all artistic and cultural expressions. The reading of literature once fostered an appreciation of the myriad shades of the human psyche. No more. It is now almost singly focused on the machinations of power. Never quite defined, always shadowy, omnipresent, insidious and all-mighty, "power" like Lucifer of yesterday lurks in every human interaction no matter how intimate or banal or benign in appearance. History is the history of domination, and literature is the stage of a drama between those oppressing and those being oppressed, between those who do and who those who are being done to. Love, loyalty, forgiveness, patience, courage, sacrifice, kindness, understanding, even indifference, even the individual will—all these wither under the sun of power. And because power is everywhere, then of course politics, which is the theoretic and institutional arm of power, is in everything. It is in fact everything, including literature. Entitled "Literature and politics," the volume may well have said that literature *is* politics for that is what many of its contributors mean. And politics here means, not what the Greeks in the age of Pericles understood, i.e., a place where the *polis* comes to debate and settle divergent interests, but descanting on the wrongs committed on the rightful, and the rights hogged by the wrongful. It is the politics of recrimination.

Not that recrimination is not due. But recrimination by nature is subordinate. It holds the hand it professes to bite. Thus, for example, the interminable cavils about the dying of native languages, the silencing of original tongues, the imposing of the conqueror's idiom. That criticism is bizarrely all written in French or English about novels and plays and poems written in French or English. If the poet really hates writing in French, there is really a very simple solution. Since it is never taken, we may suppose that, gone the recrimination, that poetry would lose its sole reason for being. Other contradictions: the language of political emancipation is, by its own description, "anticolonial, sovereigntist and Marxist" (p. 90). How one can be anticolonial and sovereigntist *and* Marxist is a mystery, given that Marxism is a colonial import, and an ideology committed to the destruction of sovereign independent ethnic nations. It is also a paradox to be anti-colonial and a cultural particularist on the basis of universal human rights (p.142)—given that universal human rights are also a colonial import and, as the name implies, universalist.

On the topic of art and literature, one may feel a certain pinch of the soul to see that something of the expansive human spirit shrinks when literature becomes the footman of politics. Few fictional characters or storylines are we told about which do not amalgamate a collective destiny or press a communitarian point. Yet we hear much about

the harm of stereotyping. At least one essay admits that stereotyping is wrong only when non-indigenous authors do it; when hammered by indigenous novelists and storytellers, it is empowering and liberating. Wooden characterization is a small price to pay for the de-colonizing cause, and literature must be sacrificed to reason of state. This is why pronouncements such as the following are a fable. "Poetry is a necessary response to systems of power… It is through interweaving our poetry with our activism that we speak truth to power, … and enact our path to freedom," we read somewhere (p.62). In this fable, poetry and truth gallantly stand at one end of the field, facing grim "power" at the other end. Notice, however, that the said poetry is interwoven with "our activism." It is therefore activist poetry—hence politics. So the battle is really between politics and politics, or one form of power and another. This means that truth does not side with political poetry (politics being the business of strategy, not truth-seeking), and a poetry steeped in politics isn't a "response to systems of power." It is merely power speaking to power in the language of, regrettably, power.

Regrettably enough to arouse the qualms of a couple of contributors who reassure the reader that somehow, even in the heat of its political mobilization, literature can hang on to the "autonomy of art." The autonomy of art, if one had asked Michelangelo or Milton, is the freedom of one individual to re-imagine reality as he sees fit. It is unclear how this work of re-imagination is to fare under the regime of politics. First because the critic gives no guideline or example to show how this alleged freedom will endure; second, because all the novels or poems discussed in the volume are praised or condemned according to their adherence, or not, to anti-colonial politics.

If there is a novelist who ranks high in aesthetic experimental freedom but low in commitment to post-colonial discourse, we shall not know of his or her existence from this volume. And if he is not welcome at the table, then we must wonder how much the critic really wants the artist to be free. Our hunch is, not very much. And what goes for the artist also befalls the audience. On the evidence that race- and ethnicity-focused plays suffer from low public theater-going in Australia, one author cites the need for "public investment." The government should do everything to nudge Australians into seeing what they, acting on their own volition, tend to pass up. Will commercial theatres have to book a quota of Aboriginal-themed plays? Yet what if the public still doesn't buy tickets? Will Australians have to attend the said plays in exchange for, say, points on their social credit scores, the way it's done in China?

If post-colonial, anti-colonial, and de-colonized art doesn't sell well—this is where at least two articles actually speak to matters of aesthetic concern—it may be because those plays and books are simply not very good, and that there is after all a limited demand for broad sentimental generalizations sausaged into predictable storylines. Kudos to the couple of critics who remind the reader that the correct political intention does not necessarily make for good art. In the long run, weak art becomes an object more of mercy than reverence.

Littérature et politique en Océanie further reminds us that the activist's organizing passion often ends up imagining communities with little contact with social reality. Here are novels and poems full of communal ethos, of persons who "belong" to a community. But does this bear close scrutiny? Just like you and me, so Tahitians also live life in the first person. As a close and lasting acquaintance has taught one anthropologist in the volume, Tahitians tend to be live-and-let-live libertarians by inclination (p. 100). The group is your identity and your salvation, the pundit tells them; they, given the choice, prefer to carry on as individuals responsible for their own choices.

Such glimpses of lived experience appear now and then in the pages of *Littérature et politique en Océanie*. To the observer of the future, they suggest an intellectual class of the twenty-first century which, having created the envelop of an orthodoxy, let's call it the post-colonial consensus, now chafes at its authority. It is seldom in the imagination of those professing an emancipatory discourse that successful emancipatory discourse someday transitions into an orthodoxy that hates emancipation. How it bridles this hate tells us everything about how emancipatory any such discourse ever was.

DIDIER MALEUVRE
University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

A COMPANION TO ADORNO (*Blackwell Companions to Philosophy*). By Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer and Max Pensky (Eds.). Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020. 660 pp.

Noting the half-century that has now passed since Theodor Adorno's untimely death in August 1969, the editors of Blackwell's mighty new symposium on all aspects of the Frankfurt thinker's theoretical legacy announce that, in the intervening years, 'the landscape of his critical reception has transformed and diversified in manifold ways' (xv). The narrative of Adorno's trajectory was for many years of a return from transatlantic exile to a postwar Germany, in the western half of which he played a conscientious, if agonised, role as a public intellectual, displaying an ever more fastidious refusal of accommodation either with the currents of official culture or the oppositional politics that would coalesce in the militant students' movement of the late 1960s. On this account, his erstwhile Marxist commitments congealed into a mannered distaste for engagement, his philosophical work ascending into a neo-metaphysical airless ether, until aesthetic themes alone were finally all that preoccupied him. As the Blackwell editors put it, however, 'By the turn of the millennium, Adorno had reemerged in scholarship in a rather new guise, as a thinker whose works were best understood in their full independence as contributions to defining questions of the philosophical canon' (xv). Since then, there has scarcely been a time that has failed to seem right for another compendious collection of essays on Adorno, but the present volume proves to be one of the more signal achievements of recent years.

Bertolt Brecht, who scarcely took the first generation of Frankfurt thinkers seriously, once remarked that nobody who lacked a sense of humour would stand a chance of understanding dialectics. By much the same token, nobody who lacks a gigantic range of cultural and philosophical reference, and one that is ever vigilant for the first trace of oxidation into ideology in any of its component parts, will find themselves equipped to take on the entirety of Adorno's thought. Blackwell's volume has been neatly classified into seven overarching sections: Intellectual Foundations; Cultural Analysis; History and Domination; Social Theory and Empirical Inquiry; Aesthetics; Negative Dialectics; and Ethics and Politics. These parameters enable the contributors, drawn from the global mandarinate of commentators on Adorno and the Frankfurt School with very few obvious omissions, to address very nearly the full scope of Adorno's published output, as well as certain of his academic lectures, radio talks and interviews. Nobody has felt much inclined

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to take on the notoriously intractable work of Adorno's Oxford period, on Husserlian phenomenology (the work translated into English as *Against Epistemology*), and there is surprisingly little discussion of his critique of German existentialism, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964), but the primary texts – the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (co-authored with Max Horkheimer, 1947), *Minima Moralia* (1951), *Prisms* (1955), the three volumes of *Notes to Literature* (1958-65), *Negative Dialectics* (1966) and the posthumously published, unfinished *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) – are each subjected to productive, animated and often critical readings that will mostly prove to be of great value to the growing international body of Adorno scholars.

The question of Adorno's parallax shift with regard to the structuring principles of Marxist theory is addressed by Peter Osborne. Concerned that Adorno is often guilty of shining a peripheral negative light on to a whole systemic field, which he then characterises as a reified totality, Osborne contends that his thought might often be seen as having transformed the methodological apparatus of Marx's *Capital* into a structural model of the whole of society or culture – this, despite the fact that, as early as 1931 in his inaugural lecture in the philosophy faculty at Frankfurt University, Adorno had already conceded that any attempt to grasp social being as a totality was now doomed to failure. Osborne suggests that Adorno has missed his own implicit point that society is not a static structure but a historical process, but this overlooks the fact that a critical consciousness of this process can no more remain rooted in an ontological stance towards it than can the subjects caught up within it. In discussing Adorno's dialectical interpretation of the relations between the individual and society, conceived in terms of psychological development, Osborne further worries that, in essays such as 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' (1938), Adorno subscribes to a prescriptive psychological model of self-evolution and maturity, perhaps inherited from Marx's metaphor of the primitivism of the commodity fetish, misreading Adorno's own analysis as a 'historically contradictory liberalism' (311). To dispense with the idea of comparative maturity, as though there were no functional difference between the social consciousness of an enraged adolescent and, say, a university research director seems a reckless wager on egalitarianism that risks throwing out the baby of grounded critical theory with the bathwater of suspected normativity. What appears 'historically contradictory' in the lens of conceptual orthodoxy might well turn out to be exemplary dialectics, and there is nothing of liberalism, either of the Victorian or Habermasian stamp, in addressing the fate of the individual under the impress of social reification.

Maeve Cooke makes a valiant effort at finding ways through and around the theory-praxis impasse of Adorno's political philosophy, particularly as it manifested itself in his controversial official abstentionism during the confrontations of 1967 and 1968. She is properly sensitive to the anti-instrumentalist nuances of his social critique, its refusal of the bourgeois Hegelian notion of continuous progress towards enlightenment, and its insistence that the individual subject's sense of injury, subjugation, and of having been cheated are the primary objective evidence that the system has failed. Nonetheless, she clings to the notions of 'pessimism' and 'resignation' in characterising Adorno's thought, and appears to suggest that he abjures the notion of slow incremental changes in society, which is hardly supported by his writings. The self-transformation she recommends, as exemplified in the political teachings of Martin Luther King, could as easily be made to conform to the proposition from the essay on fetishism in music, that 'only individuals are capable of consciously representing the aims of collectivity'.

In one of the volume's outstanding contributions, Max Pensky addresses the continually tantalising question of the metaphysical remainder that Adorno's late work, in particular *Negative Dialectics*, wished to requisition from the ascendancy of historical materialism. The something-other that remains after all sublation, the excess in the object that identitarian thinking cannot quite cover in the concept, the promise of redemption in classical theology, the gesturing towards a finally fulfilled inaugural human history in determinist versions of the Marxist tradition, the creeping quotidian intimation that there must be more to life than this, to which everybody alive is intermittently subject, is not to be wished away by the triumph of reason or the materialist explication of origins. As Pensky writes, what Adorno sought was 'the possibility of a metaphysical experience without idealism' (515), which might well constitute a partial knowledge of the existing faulty totality. In related vein, Brian O'Connor asks whether the famous technique of 'immanent critique' propounded by the first Frankfurt thinkers can lead to the uncovering of truth by determinate negation, producing in the process a changed philosophy that might begin truly to express the wealth of real experience, given that such a task inevitably remains dependent on whatever textual monoliths it finds itself addressing.

Adorno's aesthetic writings have undoubtedly generated the largest volume of critical comment in recent years, not all of it managing to avoid the disarming motivation that talking about art is a whole lot more congenial than talking about Auschwitz. Owen Hulatt's essay on the notion of aesthetic autonomy raises a number of objections to Adorno that fail to grasp the historical dialectic in his theory. Hulatt gives the impression of still looking fruitlessly for a system, while his own experiential model of aesthetic reception presumes that critical reflection on the non-aesthetic elements – social criticism, philosophical problems – stands at an exclusive remove from aesthetic appreciation itself, as though consciousness of art lived only in the immediate experience of it, with no opening for reflection before and after it. Hulatt's representation of the truth-content of an artwork is limited to an assertoric or propositional model, and the claim that, for Adorno, 'their mechanisms of representation and appearance are hermetically sealed' (362) appears to have confused the functional autonomy that Adorno claimed for artworks vis-a-vis society with their sensual and semantic capabilities.

As so often, it is Adorno's animadversions on popular music, especially the commercial jazz of the mid-century, that constitute the chafing point for those who are simultaneously magnetically attracted and sorely irritated by his thought. Andrew Bowie's contribution raises more questions than it settles in this area, not least in the contiguity of his charge that Adorno is too sweepingly inclusive in his definition of jazz with his own endorsement of the claim that a better term for the genre would be 'Black American Music', a capacious category that would see everything from rag to rap, James Scott to Nipsey Hussle, tidied into it. Jazz ceased to be the music of resistance to black oppression the minute white musicians moved into it, which is to say, at its outset, and while those who flinch at Adorno's critique of the commercial basis of jazz in manufactured hit songs are always ready to talk about John Coltrane, Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman, interestingly few of them have anything to say in the context about Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday or Sarah Vaughan, still less Kenny Ball or Cleo Laine. There is an elided dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity in the aesthetic response of audiences to jazz that is absent from the theoretical defence of it. Working on the radio project at Princeton, Adorno already noted the tremor of relief that goes through a nightclub crowd when the band launches into something familiar after a wander through terra incognita, a phenomenon

that tends to undermine the argument retailed by Bowie that live performance is the key to understanding the seriousness of jazz, as distinct from the massive recorded output it has been happy to generate from the moment of its inception to the MP3 era. The claim here that jazz, in all the indignity of its appropriation by the culturally conservative and the comfortably off, is 'a powerful counter to the return of forms of oppression and exclusion' (135) carries more than the suspicion of crossed fingers.

Blackwell's editors have convoked a handsome body of scholarship that goes a long way to matching the heterogeneity of its subject matter. The inevitable editorial oversights – Adorno dying a year too early here, Alban Berg possibly having written his Violin Concerto a year after his own death there, the repeated invocation of a composer called Kurt Eisler (a little-known confrère of the great Hanns Weill) – are fewer and further between than they might have been in a collection this size. That Adorno's positions, often argued from the rhetorical fringe, from a squeezed margin of experience at the edge of the tidal currents of conformity, still elicit a mixture of provoked demurral and exasperated forbearance, is continuing testimony to their incendiary nature. Despite the occasional careless locution in this volume, they were never intended to be a fixed corpus of dogma, but equally they are more than marginalia to an ethically frangible postwar society and the sclerotic commercial culture that serves it, the arteries of which have only narrowed further in the era of music downloads, online petitions and the bedlam of social media. It would be possible to disprove many of the contentions Adorno advanced throughout the forty years of his active intellectual life, and still not dispense with him, because his theoretical practice is first and foremost a methodology, a matter of patient negative attention to the enormities and calamities of the historical process and the sufferings they engender, deny, and then aggravate.

STUART WALTON
Torquay, UK

AESTHETICS: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION. By Bence Nanay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. 144 pp.

With hundreds of titles in Oxford's *Very Short Introduction* series, including volumes covering most of the branches of philosophy, one may wonder why it took so long to get one in aesthetics. Those studying aesthetics may not be surprised, but Bence Nanay's *Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction* is a welcome addition.

Aesthetics has become too frequently discussed in the context of art, to the point where any distinction between philosophy of art and aesthetics seems almost superficial. Nanay addresses right away this common conflation by stating directly that aesthetics is not the same thing as philosophy of art. "If an experience is worth having for you, it thereby becomes a potential subject of aesthetics" (3). This claim, in a way, sets the stage for the rest of the book. While many of our aesthetic experiences involve art, it is important to realize, as Nanay notes, "Aesthetics is everywhere" (2). Aesthetics is the study of the experiences that are evoked by objects, which include artworks but also goes beyond art.

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What does it mean for an experience to be considered an 'aesthetic' one? In Chapter Two, "Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll," Nanay cautions that we cannot be too inclusive, which would potentially render the term aesthetics as almost meaningless. But where is the line drawn? Nanay describes and dismisses as insufficient four accounts of aesthetics that have been popular and influential: beauty, pleasure, emotion, and 'valuing for its own sake.' While I won't recount all of Nanay's explanations and criticisms here, he concludes the chapter by claiming that all of these different accounts point to one thing: "what is special about aesthetics is the way we exercise our attention in aesthetic experiences" (20-21).

To begin his discussion about attention, Nanay employs as an example the painting *The Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. When you look at this painting for the first time, you are drawn to the foreground, depicting a man with a cart and beast. Then, your eyes may move from the landscape to the seascape. Eventually, if you are concerned with titles of artworks, you may wonder about Icarus. You will notice two legs (barely noticeable) sticking out of the water on the right side of the work. Clearly, these legs belong to Icarus. And now that your attention has found these legs, you cannot unsee them and will be drawn to them. Nanay believes that your experience is now very different from the time before you attended to these legs. Seeing Icarus's legs now brings the pieces of this picture together. In other words, when your attention changes, then your experience will also change.

Attention, however, has its limits. People cannot attend to many things all at once, so they have to make choices. After detailing some different ways of attending, Nanay illustrates with a James Bond scene. Imagine that James Bond discovers a bomb that he must defuse. He's not exactly familiar with this kind of bomb, so he's looking all around to find the specific wire to cut. So, he is attending to many features of the bomb, but he has a specific goal in sight. When having an aesthetic experience, the opposite happens. We are attending to the various features of the object and looking all around it (just like James Bond), but the difference is that we are not looking for anything specific. We have no clear goal in mind. "Our attention is free and open-ended" (34). This kind of attending suggests that aesthetic experience is the result of an action, and as such, it can take time. But, as Nanay is quick to point out, attention is not likely the definitive condition of an aesthetic experience. It is just that during an aesthetic experience we attend to the object and also to the quality of the experience (and the relation between the two). This, in part, is what makes these experiences personally significant to the beholder, and perhaps, engrains it in our memory.

The next two chapters (Four and Five) concern the relationship between aesthetics and the self and others. One of the more interesting historical ideas that Nanay wants to overcome is that aesthetics is about making judgments. He argues that the rewarding aspect is not forming a judgment, but rather "the temporal unfolding of our experiences in aesthetic contexts" (46). The move toward global aesthetics helps advance this claim, as most non-Western theories do not emphasize judgment. While it is clear that people will have disagreements (ands strong opinions) about objects, aesthetics is not about regulating or enforcing. In other words, aesthetics is not primarily a normative discipline. Disagreements and agreements will happen, and, while there isn't a right or wrong, there can be accurate and inaccurate experiences. And this is why critics, for instance, are so valuable as they help direct our attention to aspects of artworks that might otherwise be overlooked. Nanay concludes by warning against an anything-goes approach to aesthetics, and that it must be tempered with an aesthetic humility.

This book contributes to a recent and positive trend in the field to make a sharper distinction between aesthetics and philosophy of art. However, despite emphasizing this distinction, this book still seems to lean too heavily on examples taken from art. The main ideas might have been demonstrated in a stronger way had there been more examples—there were a few—of attending aesthetically in other specifically non-art contexts. But a major strength of this volume is the blending of philosophical insights with research in the science of perception and with non-Western aesthetic ideas. Bence Nanay's *Aesthetics: A Very Short Introduction* is a good and insightful read for scholars and non-specialists alike.

MICHAEL SPICHER
Boston Architectural College & Massachusetts College of Art and Design

KEYS TO THE BEYOND: FRITHJOF SCHUON'S CROSS-TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE OF TRANSCENDENCE. By Patrick Laude. New York: State University of New York (SUNY) Press, 2020, 404 pp.

> "[W]hat is needed in our time…is to provide some people with keys fashioned afresh—keys no better than the old ones but merely more elaborated and reflective—in order to help them rediscover the truths written in an eternal script in the very substance of the spirit."[1]
>
> – Frithjof Schuon

A remarkable facet of today's world is the proximity in which diverse human beings and collectivities find themselves. Diversity appears everywhere and is a hallmark of our times. Yet how are we to understand this pluralism? Never have all the world's religions and their mystical dimensions been available as they are today, virtually at the touch of a human finger. Now anyone can access the most esoteric teachings of the East and West that were once made available to only those sufficiently prepared and qualified.

It is through a cross-cultural analysis that this book studies the *corpus* of the philosopher Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998), a leading exponent of the perennial philosophy. This work explores Schuon's original vocabulary and his contribution to the field of comparative religion through a cross-religious and trans-religious hermeneutics and understanding.

Patrick Laude has authored numerous books on esoterism, mysticism and comparative religion. This work consists of ten very lucid and no less illuminating chapters: 1) *Ātman*, *Māyā* and the Relatively Absolute; 2) The Avatāric Mystery; 3) *Upāya*: Religion as Relatively Absolute; 4) The Nature of Things and the Human Margin; 5) Trinitarian Metaphysics; 6) Necessary Sufism and the Archetype of Islam; 7) The Divine Feminine; 8) The *Yin-Yang* Perspective and Visual Metaphysics; 9) The "Tantric" Spiritualization of Sexuality; and 10) Esoteric Ecumenism.

The outlook of modernism and postmodernism essentially repudiates objectivity due to its subjectivist relativism, which signifies an end to the alleged grand narratives of the present day. This, however, flies in the face of logic as there is an obvious self-contradiction here, because to reject objectivity is to undermine the premise of relativism itself. The idea that there is no universal truth or that all knowledge is social construction that

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everything is an interpretation is self-contradicting. This itself is an absolutization of the relative, which is none other than relativism. According to Schuon, a relativistic "assertion nullifies itself if it is true and by nullifying itself logically proves thereby that it is false; its initial absurdity lies in the implicit claim to be unique in escaping, as if by enchantment, from a relativity that is declared to be the only possibility." (p. 13) Laude notes that the Divine Essence, like the Absolute, evades all attempts to be measured and cannot be reduced: "The Absolute is that which is totally itself without any qualification and is, at the same time, necessary and independent from anything else." (p. 161)

Because of the reductionistic trend of *historicism* that pervades contemporary academia, attempts to discern a common ground or essential doctrinal convergences across the religious and spiritual traditions are regarded with a deeply entrenched skepticism. Metaphysics in such a context is inextricably determined by socioeconomic and political factors. Yet this current study demonstrates that it is through a cross-cultural analysis and esoteric ecumenicism of the religions rooted in metaphysics that common insights and their diverse modulations can be distilled. From the outset of the book, Laude refers to the important work of Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–1993), Professor Emeritus at Keio University in Japan, who called for a "meta-historical" metaphysical dialogue that would "be crystallized into a *philosophia perennis* in the fullest sense of the term."[2]

Laude informs us that "The doctrinal core of Schuon's metaphysical exposition lies in envisaging non-dual Reality under an indefinite number of aspects and vantage points." (p. 16) He adds elsewhere, "it is only by envisaging reality from a metaphysical point of view—one rooted in ultimate non-duality underlying all phenomena—that one can fully recognize a transcendent unity of religions." (p. 120)

Religions can be understood in their exoteric or outward dimension and in their esoteric or inner dimension: however, both are needed for the integral understanding of religion. Schuon affirms "exoterism must always start from the relative while esoterism starts from the Absolute to which it gives a more strict, and even the strictest possible meaning." (p. 153) This esoteric perspective is not for everyone as Schuon cautions "truths that are too elevated may…actually become errors in the consciousness of a man who is too earthly or too passionate." (p. 121) An example of this is provided with the Buddhist *upāya* "saving means," which can be misunderstood as being a mere dispensable instrument while it is actually a necessary sacred mediation.

Laude writes the following, which is consistent with Schuon's approach: "immanence cannot be apprehended independently from transcendence." (p. 47) This discernment is missing within New Age spirituality as it asserts immanence to the exclusion of transcendence. Through metaphysics, we can say that transcendence is immanence and immanence is transcendence. Yet, transcendence always precedes immanence and not the other way around. This is why religions tend to emphasize *a priori* transcendence in their dogmatic and traditional teachings.

Schuon speaks to the necessity of spiritual forms in the integral practice of religion, yet he simultaneously articulates that it is only through esoterism that the spiritual forms can be fully understood:

> Every Tradition is necessarily an adaptation, and adaptation implies limitation…. These limitations must needs be found in some manner or other in the origins of the traditional forms and it is inevitable that they should be manifested in the course of the development of these forms, becoming most marked at the end of this development, to which they themselves contribute. If these limitations are necessary for the vitality of a Tradition, they

> remain none the less limitations with the consequences which that implies…. It could not indeed be otherwise, even in the case of the sacred symbols, because only the infinite, eternal, and formless Essence is absolutely pure and unassailable, and because its transcendence must be made manifest by the dissolution of forms as well as by its radiation through them. (p. 138)

For Schuon the relationship between essence and form is described here: "Form proceeds from essence, but the latter remains eminently free in regard to form." (p. 208) From this point of view, we can make sense of Schuon's remark that "explicitly to practice one religion is implicitly to practice them all." (p. 192) This is because the doctrine of the perennial philosophy or the transcendent unity of religions upholds that all religions converge in the Absolute as they originate and return to the Divine Essence. The term Tradition in this context needs clarifying, and Laude defines it as "a divinely inspired and instituted reality whose core principle, the transcendent wisdom of the ages, is manifested through a diversity of revelations and symbols in response to the various conditions of time and place." (p. 188)

Transcendence does not in any way repudiate the human realm or diversity; on the contrary, "the Unity or Non-Duality that metaphysics recognizes is not an absolute negation of multiplicity but an essential integration of the later into the former." (p. 54) Laude makes a very important point regarding the application of metaphysics to the human realm: "the recognition of transcendent essences cannot readily translate into a rigid categorization of human phenomena." (p. 260) It becomes clear that through comparative metaphysics, as Laude makes powerfully clear, "a term borrowed from one tradition may serve to enlighten some aspects of another." (p. 352)

Keys to the Beyond provides an unmatched academic analysis of the work of Frithjof Schuon, who in large part remains misunderstood. This is an important work for those who seek a deeper understanding of this complex thinker. This penetrating analysis articulates how religions are necessary forms that correspond to the diverse human beings and collectivities the world over. Although the religions are each a manifestation of the relative Absolute, each religion utilizes words to point to a transcendent reality. The religions use language as the Zen adage of the finger pointing at the moon, directing consciousness from the tool as the finger to the moon as reality itself. If the finger is mistaken for the moon, akin to language being taken as an end unto itself rather than the reality it is alluding to, it remains obscuring and veiling as opposed to clarifying and revealing. It remains a trapping, rather than a doorway into the universal and timeless wisdom to realize the formless and transpersonal essence found at the heart of all the religions, what is—unborn and therefore undying—always here and now.

Notes

[1] Frithjof Schuon, "Preface," to *Understanding Islam: A New Translation with Selected Letters*, trans. Mark Perry and Jean-Pierre Lafouge, ed. Patrick Laude (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2011), p. xvii.

[2] See Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

SAMUEL BENDECK SOTILLOS
California, USA

DYNAMICS OF SUBALTERN CONSCIOUSNESS: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES. By Bishnu Charan Dash (Ed.). Delhi: Abhishek Prakashan, 2015. 347 p.

Subaltern Studies has been at the centre of critical academic discourse on South Asia as well as the postcolonial world, ever since its emergence few decades ago. The agenda of Subaltern Studies to challenge the traditional metanarratives in historiography by dominant communities goes hand in hand with the postcolonial project of the empire writing back to the colonial power centres.

Dynamics of Subaltern Consciousness: Critical Perspectives is a collection of essays edited by Bishnu Charan Dash and attempts to grapple with the ways in which the category 'subaltern' can be understood, largely in the Indian context. The fact that these essays have been put together after a conference at Assam University accounts for the plurality of the 'texts' discussed and, at times, the discontinuity in the manner in which it elaborates on the theme that runs through the essays- the subaltern consciousness. The introduction to the book attempts to locate Subaltern Studies in the larger postcolonial discourse and touches upon various scholars' and their works that contributed to the emergence of the subaltern as a category: the Hegelian master-slave dialectics, the rebellious black in Frantz Fanon, the East-West binary in Edward Said, the ambivalence of 'otherness' in Homi K. Bhabha, and the gendered and voiceless subaltern in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, along with many others. The endeavour is to trace the birth of the 'New Subaltern', one who rebels and resists. The introduction also provides a glimpse of the history of the Subaltern Studies Collective, summarising few major arguments from the likes of Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakravarty. The essays in the book are accommodated under three sections, though these are not precisely water tight.

The book opens with Rabindra Kumar Rath's essay that discusses the possibilities of a reversal of hegemonic appropriations and the retrieval of the subaltern spirit through literary texts. Several essays in the book talk of the subaltern identity in relation to Dalit identity. Somenath Bhattacharjee traces the subalternity of Dalits by referring to various statistical data on their backwardness in the educational and socio-economic fields as well as by citing the cases of caste violence and atrocities against them. Prethi Nair's essay argues how Dalit autobiographies use narratives of pain as resistance, and create an institutional space to enter the public sphere. One could wonder whether the argument can stand the fact that Dalit oral narratives, including songs and stories, have preceded the life writings as the voices of resistance. For instance, Vulli Dhanaraju's essay brings forth the Telangana struggle (1946-51) against feudalism through a detailed study of the life and works of the Dalit poet Voyya Raja Ram from Warangal. The essay is a strong reminder of the ways in which the subalterns have and continue to voice their resistance through what can be termed as people's songs/ poetry. Jaydeep Sarangi studies the intersectional subaltern identity of Manoranjan Byapari, through his autobiography *Itibritte Chandal Jiban.* Sarangi talks of the graphic descriptions and unusual use of language to reveal the horrors of caste violence as well as multiple flavours of subalternity, of having challenging national identity and a refugee status. Anand Balwant Patil's essay appears a bit too judgmental of the Marathi Dalit literature in its association with Black American literature. Questions regarding the agency of the Dalit writers get dismissed off largely, accusing them of being mere imitators. S. C. Chelliah's essay analyses the subaltern

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consciousness through a comparative reading of Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* and Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi". Chelliah is appreciative of Devi's technique of making her tribal woman character use her own body, as a tool to speak against the oppression, from the police force, in this case, as opposed to the silenced Dalit characters in Roy's work.

Several essays in this book are in the context of Odisha. Bijay Kumar Danta's essay talks about the ways in which the subaltern resists the domination through songs. The first song considered is by Kainphula Baba, who rebukes Lord Jagannatha, while the second song is "Wakawaka… This Time for Africa", the African protest song that was adopted by pop icon Shakira in the context of the Football World Cup of 2010. While the first song symbolises the rebellion and resistance of the subaltern, the second reminds us of the ways in which the consumer industry makes profit by converting pain into entertainment. Bikash Chandra Dash's essay argues against the assumption that the subaltern can not voice her opinion and if she does, it would not lead to any change. Dash puts faith on the democratisation process under the constitution of India and talks of the victories by tribals in Odisha against industrialization and displacement- in three places, Kalinganagar, Lanjigarh and Kucheipadar. The essay instils hope for peoples' movements that, often, have to go against the state in its struggle for the rights of the subalterns. K. Balachandran's essay sheds light on to the subaltern and caste consciousness as expressed in Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry, two inseparable social categories, according to Partha Chatterjee. The graphic representations and descriptions of the streets, brothels and subaltern lives in his poetry reveal the nuances and intersections of marginal lives. Kalikinkar Pattanayak's essay discusses a variety of subaltern identities from Odia poetry, and reveals multiple sites of oppression and resistance; between the landlord and the tenant, between the factory owners and the workers, between the ministers and common people, between Adivasis and the government etc.

Madhusmita Pati's essay attempts to address subaltern identity at multiple levels through a reading of Amitav Ghosh's novel, *The Hungry Tide.* Concerns of citizenship with partition, and displacement during partition as well as environmental conservation projects lead to multiple layers to the subaltern identity of people in the Sunderbans region. Pati empahsises on the need for a collaborative community, as proposed by Ghosh, to overcome the subalternity.

Few essays in this book deal with the subalternity associated with sexuality. Dipak Kumar Doley's discusses the subalterns in Bollywood- lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, hijras, kothis etc. He argues that while the mainstream Bollywood films continue to portray people with these identities as deviants, the alternate films have, on the other hand, evolved to address their concerns and represent their stories with political and social sensitivity. Harajit Goswami, on the other hand, attempts to bring out voice of the 'sexual subalterns' by a reading of few lesbian stories from *Boats on Land* by Janice Pariat. Goswami argues against Christianity for creating the stigma against the LGBTQI community.

Black identity and its subalternity seems to be the concern for few essays. Pawan Kumar Upadhyay's deals with the Black subalterns in a predominantly White American society, through a reading of the racial consciousness as expressed in the poems of Rita Dore in the collection *Thomas and Beulah.* The poetic renderings are part of the protest by the poet against racism in America. Shreyashi Mukherjee discusses Black literature in the light of Spivak's arguments about the voiceless nature of the gendered subaltern. Mukherjee's contestation is based on the slave narratives and neo-slave narratives that reveal the rebellious nature of the Blacks.

The gendered nature of subalternity is also discussed in few essays. Nandini C. Bora brings forth the subaltern identity of women in the Elizabethan England through her reading of *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. Her arguments regarding the tactics used by Shakespeare's women characters to fight against patriarchy hold true even today- acquisition of material wealth, language and apparel. Anuradha Chaudhuri's essay attempts a reading of the Malay novels of Joseph Conrad to reveal the spirit of resistance displayed by the women subalterns. Several instances of subversion and resistance are brought out in the essay. Chaudhuri unravels how the women in Conrad's select novels use resistance, subversion and self-expression to fight suppression, domination and exploitation, thereby leading to a version of reciprocity.

There are also a few essays that seem to be slightly exaggerated in its understanding of subalternity. Niranjan Jena claims to look at the subaltern consciousness in ancient Sanskrit literature, but fails to look at the varna-caste system critically; produces accounts from Sanskrit literature on the 'lower status' of Shudras; fails to account for the subaltern identities of the Dalit-Bahujans, the Athi-shudras. One may consider Jena's endeavour as a limited one that does not suffice the understanding of the subaltern concerns within the literary works that were considered. Paramba Shree Yogamaya's essay on *Dasa* confuses the caste and class categories and fails to critically analyse the evolution of the terms like *Dasa* and *Dasis*, but ventures ahead to provide a gist of the arguments from Vedic to Stotra literatures. Asima Ranjan Parhi attempts to attribute a situational subaltern identity to certain characters like Karna and Duryodhana in Mahabharata. Parhi claims that the situational subalterns are reminiscent of the new subaltern. One may find the arguments problematic as there are more marginalised identities, like that of Eklavya, in the epic. Jaydeep Chakraborty's essay appears to be a limited reading of the Bhakti movement, songs and poetry, in its claim that the Bhakti movement was an effort to resist the conversion of the subalterns in Hindu society into Islam. The example about the conversion of Yavan Haridas into Brahma Haridas seems slightly fictionalised as well. Amlanjyoti Sengupta's essay discussing the minority status of certain languages in the larger context of a trilingual education policy in India talks of the ways in which even dominant languages of some states acquire a situational subaltern nature in other states. But, Sengupta seems to overlook the fact that subalternity may not be attributed merely on the use of language, without considering the social and cultural capital of the users.

The book, indeed, reminds us of the need to discuss and contest the nature of subaltern identity in South Asia, but also makes us aware of the extent to which this category can be stretched to accommodate the otherwise dominant identities. The informed reader will, hence, make her choice of essays from this book.

REJU GEORGE MATHEW
National Institute of Technology Calicut, India

THE IDEA OF SOCIALISM: TOWARDS A RENEWAL. By Axel Honneth. Translated by Joseph Ganahl, Polity Press UK, Cambridge: 2017. 145 pp.

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Thinking about socialism in the contemporary time, one can only doubt if it is even possible to think the way Neo-liberalism has captured the polity, economy and society. Particularly, the post 1990s, after the collapse of Soviet Union, the global capitalism of market economy has become instinct of human mind from a metropolitan city to a local village. The public sector has declined almost to a minimal level. In other words, nothing has remained which is not controlled by private sector. In this context, the critical school philosopher Axel Honneth's effort is to bring our attention in his recent book *The Idea of Socialism: Towards a Renewal*, to rethink about socialism with a new pragmatic approach. Honneth has been arguing in his other path breaking work on recognition, in which love, right, and solidarity, are inevitable political and ethical values share with the idea of justice. In this short compelling book, he draws the ideas from socialist utopian tradition of enlightenment, particularly drawing idea from Hegel, Marx, and Dewey. This is not a political project as he stated, the book re-emphasises the socialist imagination within a democratic framework and revitalise the importance of socialism to emphasise the idea of social freedom.

The book has five chapters including a short introduction. In the first and second chapter, the author locates the original idea of socialism. To Honneth "the original idea of socialism is rooted in the notion that in the future it will be possible to organise entire societies on the model of communities of solidarity" (pp. 24-25). This idea unifies the idea of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which is a departure from the earlier socialists. Honneth traces the French Revolution and industrial revolution to discuss about the earlier thinkers of socialism such as Robert Owen, Saint Simonists and Fourierists, later he joined Proudhon, Marx, and Dewey. Honneth critiques the earlier modern socialists who confined themselves to the economic sphere only and often dismissed the idea of social and political rights. He further shows the limitation of Marx and Marxism, which do not consider the idea of social freedom as an important feature of socialism. Honneth presents Marx's ideas of class struggle led by the oppressed proletariat, which shape the power of all society. He further writes, "Marx assumes that the motor of social development consists of natures, thereby unlocking its unexploited potential and gradually compelling the organisation of society" (p. 45).

In addition to this, Honneth critiques historical determinism to show the limitation of Marxism. To quote, "by Marx's arrival at the latest – that the market could only be replaced by a planned economy, which left no room for institutional mediation or a reassessment of priorities. For decades to come, this self-imposed theoretical handicap, cause by assuming a fixed course of historical progress, deprived socialism of the chance to explore and experiment with different strategies for realising the social freedom of the economic sphere" (p. 47). By the end of Second World War, democracy, economy, and technology drastically changed. Very particularly, it happened after the collapse of Soviet Union – the fall of Berlin Wall. Simultaneously, there has been a drastic decline of socialist economy. The win of Neo-liberal economy dominates the state, economy, and society in a bigger way, which the traditional school of socialism could not answer to the questions roused after 1990s.

Honneth reinterprets in chapter three and four the idea of socialism in a democratic framework. In the modern idea of socialism, more importance will be given to the social than the individual. Honneth attempts to create an image of society and history that would do service to socialism; therefore, everything is related to everything. "A renewed version of socialism would have to leave it up to experimentation whether the market, civil society or the democratic constitutional state represents the most appropriate steering principle when it comes to realising the social freedom in the economic sphere" (p. 58-59).

Honneth formulates his idea of social freedom from Hegel and Dewey. To him, John Dewey's idea of associational life or behaviour constitutes a basic feature of all things. Moreover, he brought the idea of social freedom and communication between members of society, which is against the social exclusion, and hierarchy, in a process that will bring the social interaction among the people. This will lead to experimental exploration of appropriate solutions to the problematic situations. Honneth introduced the realisation of freedom, "as result from the gradual overcoming of barriers to free communication among the members of the society who aim to rationally explore and lay down rules for their shared existence" (p. 62). Honneth's interpretation of Dewey's democracy resembles his idea of socialism. To quote, "on the one hand Dewey claims that all of human history is marked by the gradual expansion of communication and social interaction, and, on the other hand the notion that early socialist believed they could apply to the economic sphere" (p. 64).

According to Honneth, all these possible in democratic form of life. Here democracy does not mean only equal participation in political life, but individual can participate freely and equally to mediate between individual and society. It also allows the experienced-based knowledge to establish in various spheres of life. Honneth's idea of socialism is more Hegelian than Marxist to achieve social freedom. He strongly reiterates the importance of Dewey's pragmatism in the present context by admitting that economics is completely controlled by 'global society', but he implicitly says that moral, legal, and intimate relationship are important for family, friends and across the culture. It seems clear that Honneth's idea of socialism tries to understand the social relationship among the groups and individuals, which makes society egalitarian rather than focusing on the economics aspects only. It seems too idealistic a position, however, it appeals to the global social question.

Honneth's new idea of Socialism is closer to egalitarian liberalism and pragmatism, which is not either lofty utopian dream of revolution in a static sense. Interestingly, Honneth firmly believes in the idea of experimentalism as an approach, which is not dogmatic like traditional Marxism, rather it is to be found in Dewey's pragmatic experimentalism and Habermas' communicative ethics. Honneth offers an open dialogue to happen based on the given condition and without compromising basic tenants of socialism, or, either it encourages post-modernism or traditional approach. Furthermore, Honneth conceptualises the democratic way of life to be found in Dewey's idea of democracy.

It is interesting to see the development in the Indian context. Thinkers like Dr B. R. Ambedkar had proposed a similar approach to the project of democratic socialism though Ambedkar's idea is far radical than Honneth's idea of socialism. Ambedkar's idea of *State and Minorities* strongly endorse democracy as essential framework of a state-regulated economy, in which industries shall be part of the state, there shall be distribution of land and resources, and individual rights shall be protected by the state, any kind of discrimination are prohibited by the constitution, to Ambedkar democracy can only create an alternate viable option to live a respectful and good life both materially and socially. Interestingly, Ambedkar was a student of John Dewey, while pursuing his Masters in Columbia University, and Dewey's idea of democracy had impacted Ambedkar's political ideals. Moreover, Ambedkar's reclamation of liberty, equality, and fraternity treated as radical political philosophy inherited in his political manoeuvre. It is this revolutionary idea brings Ambedkar and Honneth closer to the idea of democratic socialism that offer a new interpretation to construe the social freedom, social solidarity and equality both in terms of economic, social and political rights in a democratic framework. I have found

that Honneth is an idealist, though he is not dogmatic, his re-emphasis on the idea of pragmatism is undeniable in the present context to renew the idea of socialism.

JADUMANI MAHANAND
O P Jindal Global University, India

BELIEVING WOMEN IN ISLAM: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION. By Asma Barlas. Texas: University of Texas Press, 2019. 120 p.

This slim volume is a simplified version of Asma Barlas' own book *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* published in 2002. According to her, the Qur'an does not support patriarchy and modern day Muslims were not properly interpreting the text. In this abridged version also, she lays bare open the wounds that were inflicted in the name of religion on the women of Muslim society. She very meticulously tries to hit upon, unread and re-read the patriarchal readings of the Qura'n, serving us on our platter the egalitarian concept of Islam in a very simple yet profound and efficacious words. The incorrigible questions – Does Islam promote and validate patriarchy? Does Islam objectify women to be merely acting as marionettes at the gesture of the eyesight of men? Does Qura'n identify men in the semblance of God? Is it the biology of the woman that reduces her to be as futile as the heap of emotions with no brains and nothing more? Is the exploitation and subjugation of women justified owing to the myth ascribed to Eve's sole sin, wherein she was vandalized as the one instigating Adam and being responsible for her and Adam's fall from paradise? All these, and many more questions that had haunted women of Islam and people of other religions in manifold ways since antiquity, have been deftly woven and answered by deconstructing the arguments of previous scholars in quite a pertinent and appealing manner.

The Qura'n's reading which till now had been interpreted as promulgating and justifying the sexual exploitation, patriarchy, women discrimination and gender inequality, is taken up as a believer's reading by Barlas. She dissects and re-reads these traditional understandings and teachings through Islam's egalitarian and anti-patriarchal lens. Through her balanced and intricately layered arguments she precipitates and brings forth the truth that Qura'n and Islam have nowhere been unjust to women and never restrict the growth and liberation of women. This is achieved by picking up apposite verses from Qura'n and offering quotations from various unswerving sources that offer an eye-opening understanding and conclusion as to what the reality is and how it had been maneuvered by those in power! She picks up her yarn of arguments from the grass root level and neatly arranges them by posing simple questions both from believers and traditional thinkers and proves that Qura'n clearly confirms and establishes equality between men and women. In doing so she takes us back to the seventh century and offers us the accounts and understandings of the age of Prophet Mohammad, alluding to the lifestyle of Prophet himself and his reverence and treatment of women. There are many arguments that are articulated by Barlas related to God and his indivisibility: first one is about God's self-revelation in Islam, "God does not discriminate: humanity includes all humanity that is and will be" (p. 4); second argument is about semblance of Men with

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God, *The Tawhid*, where God's sovereignty is indivisible and cannot be shared by anyone; the third argument is about seeing the man as the head of the family where he exercises his command and control over his children and wife by comparing the masculinity which he attributes to God in all his ignorance. The Qura'n strictly repudiates the sexualization or engenderment as father or male and affirms that it doesn't support biological supremacy. In a nutshell unraveling patriarchal interpretation offers Qura'n as a panacea to the ailments that inflicted society with sexism and misogyny so far.

Barlas brilliantly deconstructs the patriarchal monopoly of male elite, who profess unique and undivided proficiency in the interpretation and reading of Qura'n and deciphering Prophet's Word *Tafseer* in *Ahadith.* By writing she establishes her primacy in male dominated discourses and also rips apart the patriarchal stubbornness and the perversities involved in the entire process of biased interpretations.

Men's treatment of women as sexual vassal and "possessions" in compliance with their misreading of *ayat* 3:14 (verse) which they construe as "as a license to covet women" and women "as an impediment to closeness to God". They even nurture the illusion of equating women to be equivalents of "heaps of gold…. Horses branded" (p. 45) which may be possessed by men against their desire. The second *ayat* 2.222-23 (verse) is made to endorse misogynist patriarchal claim that, "Your women are a garden {harth} for you, so visit your garden as you wish…" (p. 46). These two verses that invariably and unflinchingly offer men all the rights and claims to exercise their supremacy by treating their women as their slaves, where the consent of women for intimacy is insignificant, have been beautifully offered a scaffold of support by Barlas where she suggests a metaphorical reading instead of literal one by re-reading the verse as , the verse advising men, "not about a *right to sex* , but about when sexual activity is permitted" (p. 49). Thus, the entire reducing and disparaging patriarchal play of power and authority may be exalted to the level of "graceful courtesy for men and the love's patience" when their women are menstruating. There are also well knitted arguments for women keeping their chastity and purity intact where *Chador*, *Niqab* and *Hijab* are seen as the liability of women violating which they might incur the wrath of entire Muslim community. The veiling of women by Islam has been explicated by Barlas as, "counsels, not commands" (p. 21), alluding to the historical narrative of Prophet where both men and women were counseled to guard their modesty and lower their gaze. The issue of family, marriage and divorce is revisited and useful insights are offered in many intricate issues that had been twisted and manipulated previously. While talking about men's right to divorce she discloses the egalitarian reading that if a husband decides to divorce his wife then the onus of reconciliation too falls upon man only, "as he is the one shredding the fabric of their marriage" (p. 71). The husband has been restricted in the number of times he may desert his wife by divorcing her and is at the same time prohibited from using divorce to deceive her. The book offers a complete amalgamation of Islam's history and Qura'n's *tafsir* to proclaim the egalitarian inclusiveness of both men and women on the pedestal of equality and does away, rips apart the misinterpretations offered by the traditional Islamic scholars. She, in doing so also relentlessly offers ample pertinent evidences that might otherwise have labelled her work as finagling by utilizing western and modern understanding.

SHAISTA IRSHAD
Iswar Saran P G College, Prayagraj, India

TRANSLATING ODISHA. By Paul St-Pierre. Bhubaneswar: Dhauli Books, 2019. 398 p.

A compilation of papers delivered over his career, Paul St-Pierre's *Translating Odisha* spans a range of concerns from the ethics to the politics and practice of translation, localizing the inquiry in the context of translations into Odia. The first section of the book titled "A Personal History" talks of the author's own initiation into these problems in the light of changes taking place in terms of de-centering of the positivist approach towards the human sciences globally in the late 60s, one seminal consequence of which was the emergence of Translation Studies as a discipline itself.

Section II titled "Odisha in Translation" begins by addressing the plurilingual fabric in India that is even more complicated by the tiered education system. Such a diversity necessitates the presence of a filter language like English and/or Hindi, as many translation activities, especially such as those undertaken by National Book Trust, attest to. St. Pierre also points out the role of transcreation manifest in these attempts to ensure what Sujit Mukherjee has called 'maximum readability'. This is well exemplified by his analysis of the English translation of Gopinath Mohanty's novel *Paraja*, where the expository sections often end up reifying the local particularity with a subsuming mold of the general. The author hints that the alienation inherent in translation can offer us an opportunity to evaluate and examine the text, and alongside it, the community. A socio-historical survey is undertaken next, where looking at the choice of texts with respect to periodization reveals the former to be conditioned by the latter, thus revealing the activity of translation as a discourse of history.

The next paper devotes attention to the problematic notion of originality in translation. What should be considered a translation, and what not? Gideon Toury's retort that any text is a translation if it presents itself as one is used as a corroboration to justify Sarala Das' *Mahabharata* as a translated text even if it is not a copy. St-Pierre etymologically uncovers the linkages between *traduttore* and *tradittore* in Italian, that associates translator with traitor. In a later paper in the book, the author insists that translation inherently betrays, but that this betrayal has to be understood in the double sense of infidelity as well as revelation, for if translation involves differences with respect to the original, then these differences throw light on the very tensions of the engagement that the process has been subjected to. If translation indeed has a discursive function within the larger frameworks of history and culture, it is but evident that such negative connotations too are historical constructs in resonance with the exercises of culture formation and nation building. For example, the French designation of translated texts as 'les belle infidèles' during the reign of Louis XIV offers the paradoxical association of beautiful yet unfaithful. This was a period in the 17th century when the French language was standardized and hence a need to maintain sovereignty was paramount. Foreign idioms were domesticated, an example being the rewriting of Shakespeare's plays to suit the French temperament. St. Pierre also discusses Laurence Venuti's notions of 'foreignization' and 'domestication' in this vein, whereby cultures in certain stages take recourse to either of these tendencies to fashion translations according to the need of the hour. Each of these instances points out the fact that translation is never a neutral, isolated activity. Rather, who translates what, for whom and how are the questions that need be focused on. A couple of papers

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undertake this effort to show how translation activities into Odia in the period 1807-1866 were mostly exogenous ones, aided by the colonial administration to foster English education and culture in the colony. Texts comprised mostly the *Bible* and other religious treatises. Most of Amos Sutton's translations during this phase were governed by purpose, a point St- Pierre highlights in conjunction with Christiane Nord's Skopos Theory. The Press and Registration of Books Act enacted in 1867 imposed a stricter surveillance and documentation of translated and printed books that has, in turn, aided by being a valuable source of information for the author. We find a stronger presence of Sanskrit texts being translated into Odia from 1867 till 1941 along with the setting up of presses at Cuttack and Balasore, events that the author equated with a brewing cultural nationalism in response to the hegemony of neighboring Bangla. The post political independence period after 1947 is characterized by the stage of what St- Pierre calls Indianization, when more regional texts from other languages were translated into Odia. During this phase, the National Book Trust and Sahitya Akademi played important roles in facilitating translations between different Indian languages. Also, to be noted in this context are the Russian books that were translated steadily till the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, another instance that highlights the socio-historically implicated status of the corpus of translation available in a culture.

One of the essays of the third section of the book titled "On Translation" elucidates the history of how incoherence in translation has been looked upon through ages. Whereas Dryden has advocated paraphrase above metaphrase and imitation, Cowley's translation of Pindar had involved erasure of the text's alterity to make the same comprehensible to the target mass. In contrast, Schleiermacher's approach had desisted from making the text coherent, which could also be read as a re-affirmation of the Romantic yearning for an untarnished, undomesticated foreign ethos. Maria Tymoczko's notion of translation being a metonymic activity is demonstrated through her experiences of re-telling the story of Hamlet to a West African audience where the tropes and fluidity of orature had blended into the main text.

Another essay focuses on the impact of globalization on reading, and translation in particular. In the words of Frederic Jameson, the becoming cultural of the economic and vice-versa has led to a weakening of the national state (though, this is contestable in light of recent events across the globe), rise of multinational corporations and a strengthening of regional ties. Internationalization with English as a benchmark has led to a marginalization of local languages and cultures, in turn effecting the alienation of people from their roots. This feature is reflected in the global translation scene where most texts are now translated into English from other languages, with short stories valorized with the maximum valency thanks to the shift from an oral society to a society of the marketplace.

The fourth section of the book comprises papers written on the different translations of Fakir Mohan Senapati's novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* into English, as well his autobiography *Atma-Carit*. Taking cue from his doctoral thesis on Beckett's self narration, St-Pierre shows how the process of translation involves choices that make it a uniquely original act of creation rather than a mere reproduction, a phenomenon that he in turn maps in the different translations available of Senapati's novel. The colloquial Odia poses a problem also among Odia people, many of whom purportedly accessed the work in English. Translation of words like 'kos' and 'ekadasi' as locally sedimented realities have often exchanged a plethora of gloss and expatiation. One peculiar case is that of C.V.N

Das' translation where these realities are explicated and expanded in terms of European markers, making the text a storehouse of continental jumble of references. In fact, language is by itself a very important thematic element in Senapati's novel (a fact that resurfaces in Senapati's attempt to cement the Odia language firmly against the scorn from Bengalis and English educated babus that we get to know from excerpts selected from his autobiography) that critiques the usurpation of Odia by Bangla, and Persian by English, linguistic hegemonies that go alongside disregarding local traditions. The hierarchies inherent in multilingualism that Senapati raised a voice against finds resonance in the author's treatment of the translations not as loss or failed exchange but as problematic interchange. St-Pierre's method is noteworthy, given that he diachronically contextualizes the problems that make up Senapati's novels in the reception of the same in translation.

The fifth section of the Book is dedicated to a collection of the author's introductions to books of poetry, short stories and a play by Jagannath Prasad Das. These writings illumine the contemporary developments of Odia Literature in the garb of Das' oeuvre. The tensions between illusion and reality that is accompanied by an onset of modernity in the age of technologization, and the conflict between the religious and the secular are some of the themes the author comments on in passing. His introduction to Das's *Dark Times* points out how gruesome events are represented in his art, and how that intentionally departs from the conventional modes of representation of 'objective reality' that we are wont to encounter in textbooks of history. This is followed by a short concluding section of the book where some of the introductions, forewords and prefaces written by St-Pierre find place.

In a nutshell, this book covers a spectrum of issues associated with translation in the global and local sense, the latter being the Odia literary space. They offer insights into how historically determined phenomena like colonization and globalization affect translation and its reception compounded by problems peculiar in a plurilingual society like that of India. Sensitive to poetry, and at the same time, not anaesthetized to the governing forces of changing times, St-Pierre's writings collected in this volume are a must-read for anyone attempting to seriously engage with the poetics and politics of translation that have been inherent and still inheres in the Odia language world.

SOUNAK DAS
Jadavpur University, India

JOURNALS RECEIVED

British Journal of Aesthetics, Comparative Literature, New Literary History, Poetics Today, Philosophy and Literature, Critical Inquiry, Journal of Modern Literature, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.

The *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* [ISSN 0252-8169] is a quarterly peer-reviewed academic journal published by Vishvanatha Kaviraja Institute, India since 1977. (Vishvanatha Kaviraja, most widely known for his masterpiece in aesthetics, *Sahityadarpana* or the "Mirror of Composition", was a prolific 14th-century Indian poet, scholar, and rhetorician.) The Institute was founded by Prof. Ananta Charan Sukla (1942-2020) on 22 August 1977 coinciding with the birth centenary of renowned philosopher, aesthetician, and art historian, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) to promote interdisciplinary studies in comparative literature, cultural theory, aesthetics, philosophy and criticism of the arts, religion, mythology, and history of ideas.

The Journal is committed to comparative and cross-cultural issues in literary understanding and interpretation, aesthetic theories, conceptual analysis of art, literature, philosophy, history, religion, and mythology. It also publishes special issues on critical theories of current interest and contemporary relevance. It is the oldest academic journal of India still in existence sans any institutional support.

JCLA has published the finest of essays by authors of global renown like René Wellek, Harold Osborne, John Hospers, John Fisher, Murray Krieger, Trevor Ling, Martin Bucco, Remo Ceserani, J.B. Vickery, Menachem Brinker, Milton Snoeyenbos, Mary Wiseman, Ronald Roblin, T.R. Martland, S.C. Sengupta, V.K. Chari, Gordon Epperson, Judith Lochhead, Charles Altieri, Martin Jay, Jonathan Culler, Richard Shusterman, Robert Kraut, T.J. Diffey, T.R. Quigley, R.B. Palmer, Keith Keating, and many others.

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Celebrated scholars of the time like René Wellek, Harold Osborne, Mircea Eliade, Monroe Beardsley, John Hospers, John Fisher, M.H. Abrams, John Boulton, and many Indian and Western scholars had been members of its Editorial Board.

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